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PAGE 89



**ANGUISH!
JEALOUSY! NUDITY!**

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SIMPSON**

**BRITNEY
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50 CENT
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**THE GREATEST
ROCK & ROLL STORY
EVER TOLD** **PAGE 70**

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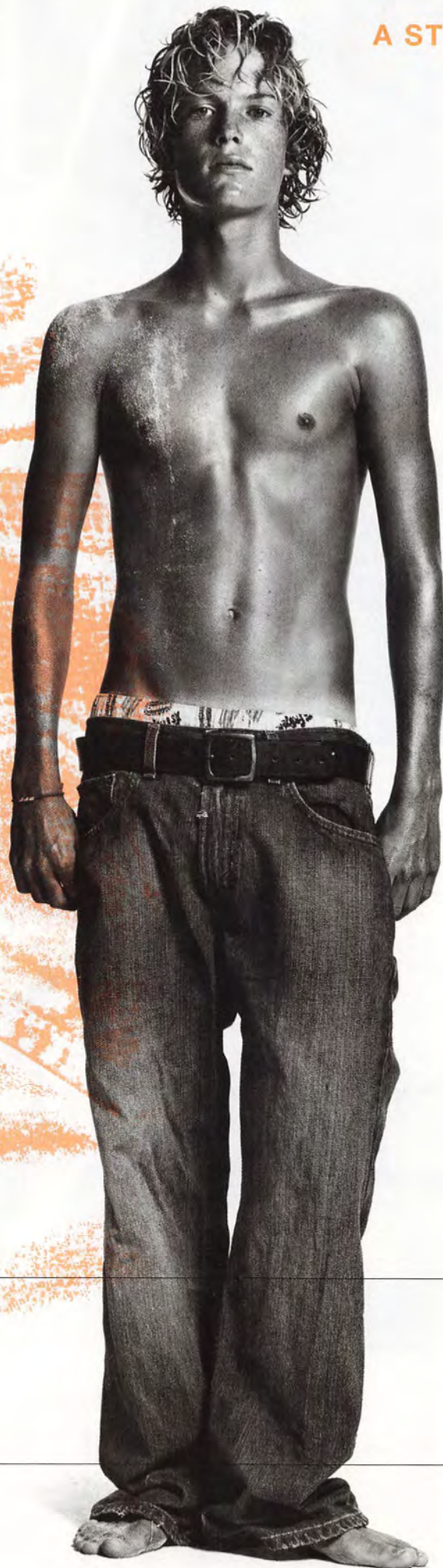
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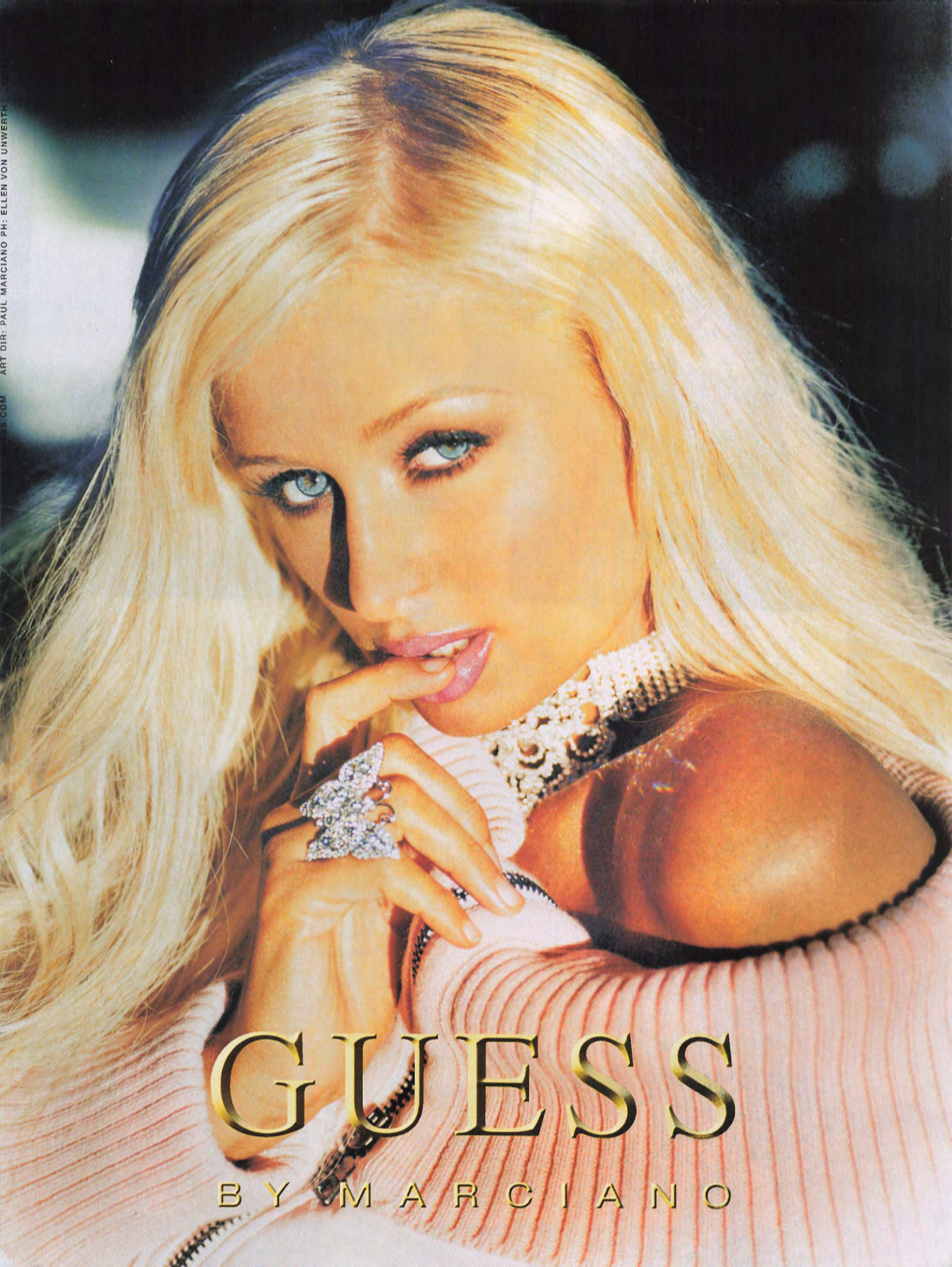
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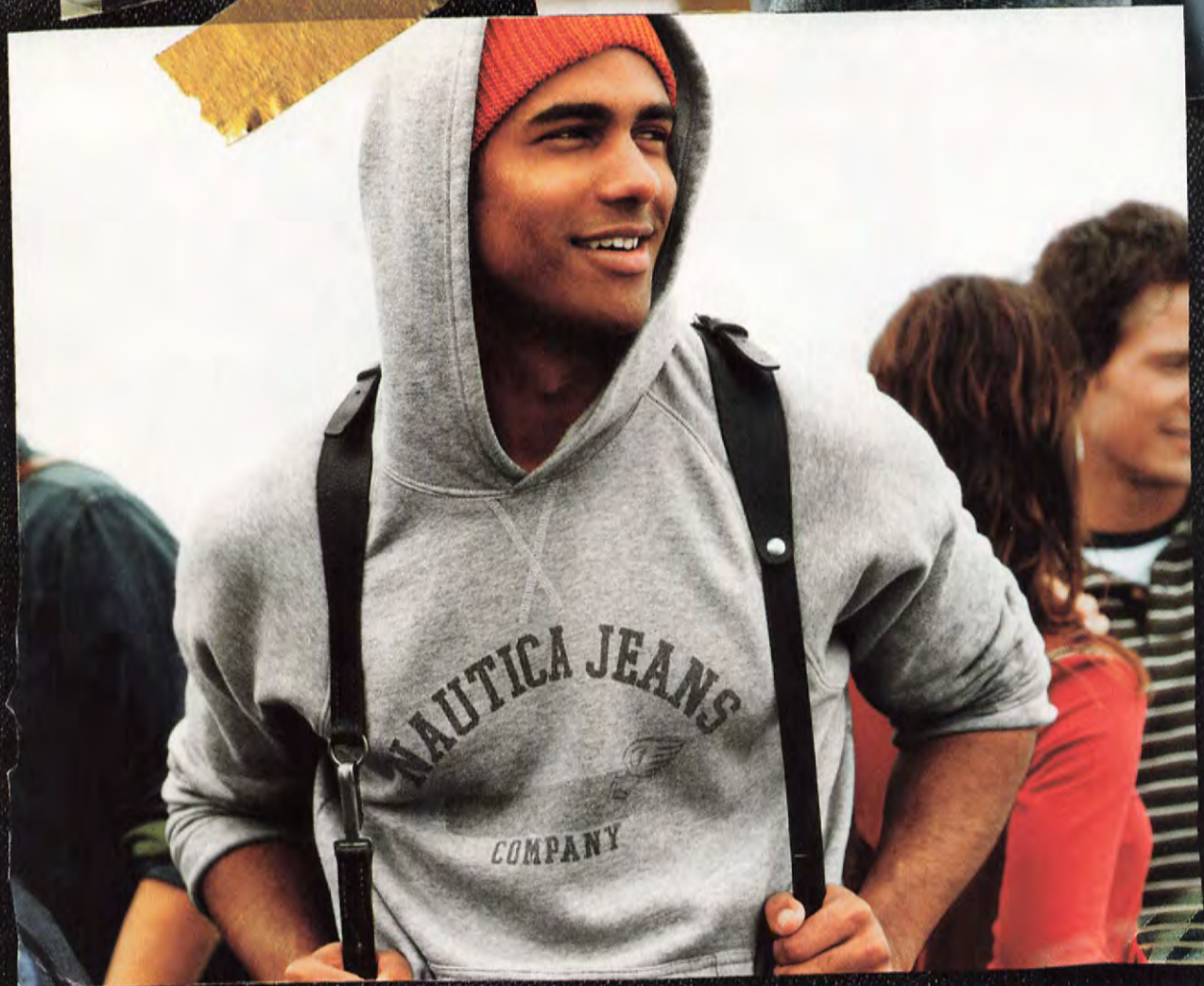
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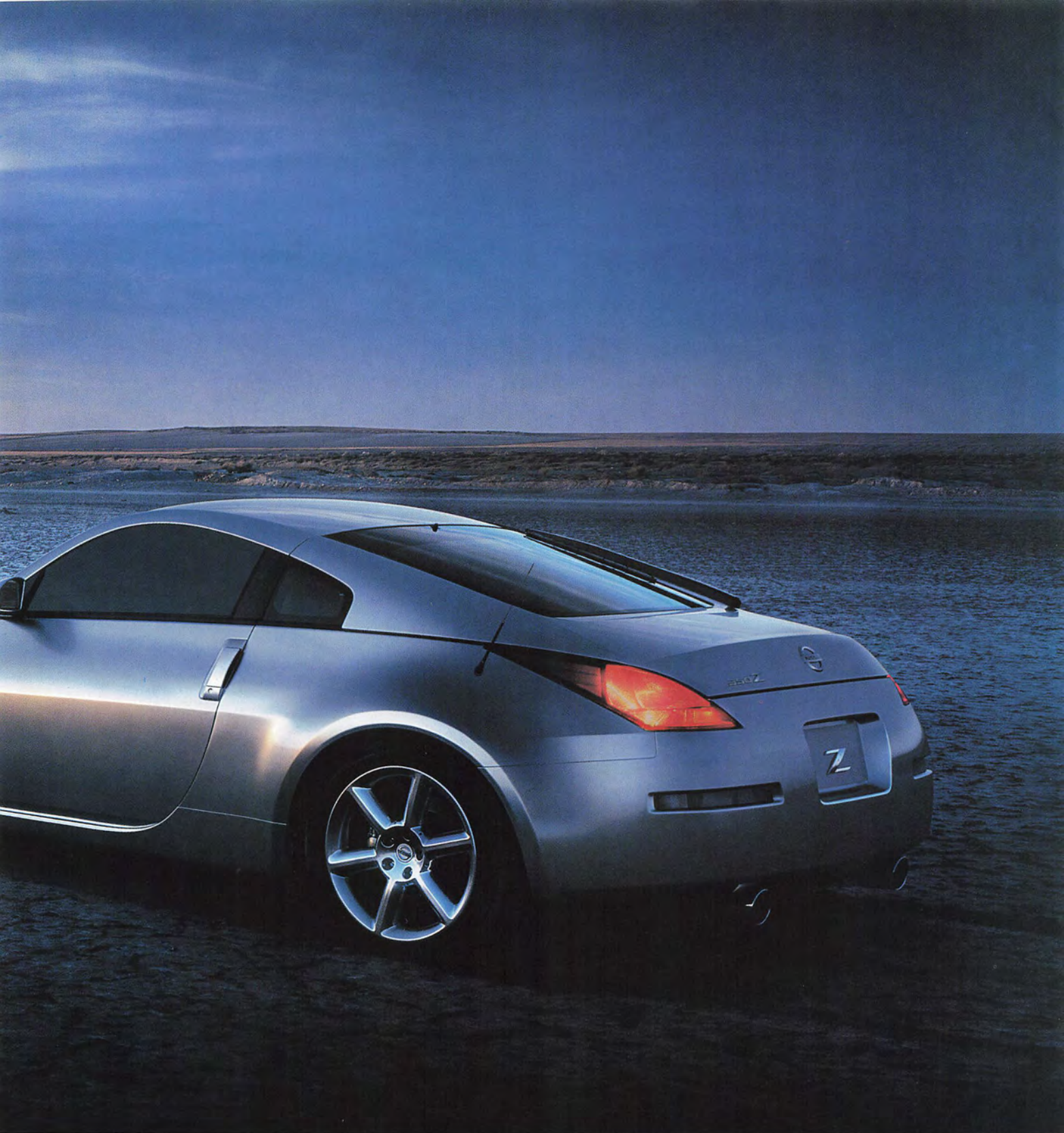
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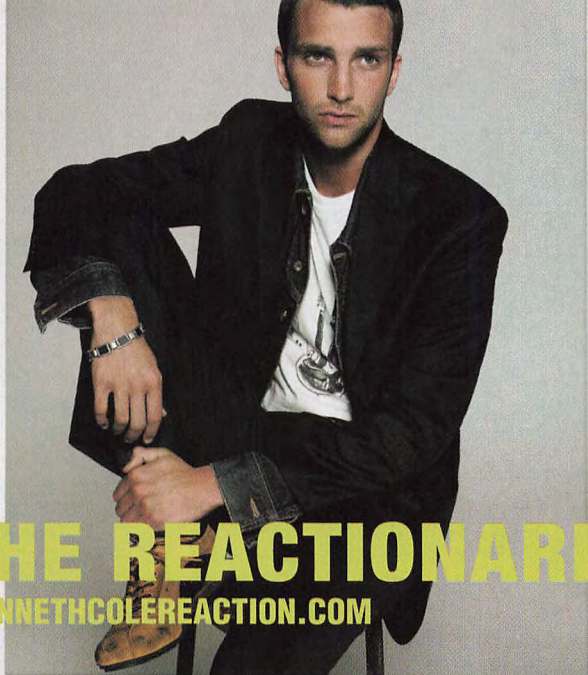


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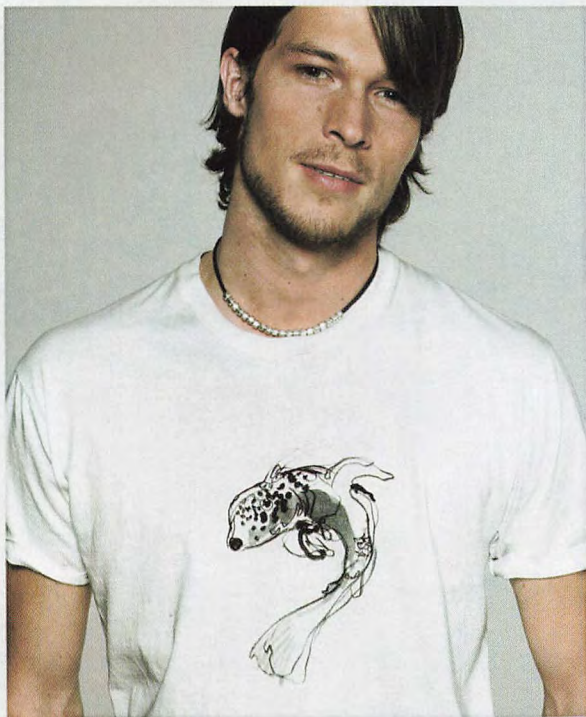
I eat my favorite food last.

THE REACTIONARIES

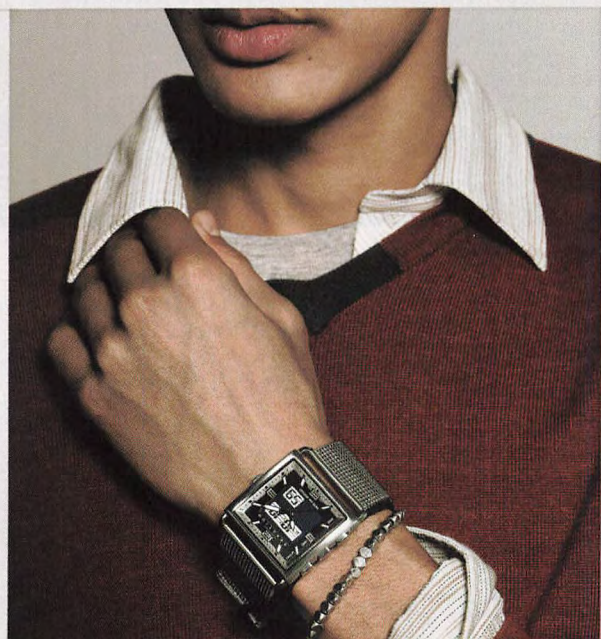
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Was a snail in a former life.



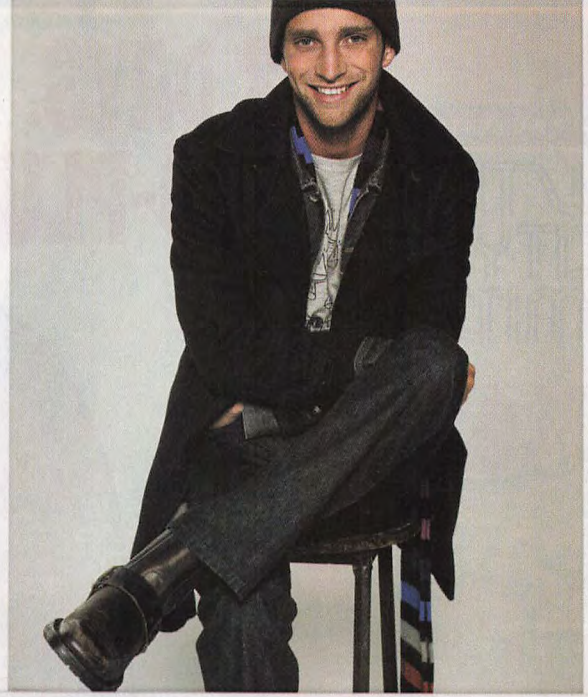
All the guys I want to sleep with are dead.



I need a minimum of 12 hours of sleep a night.

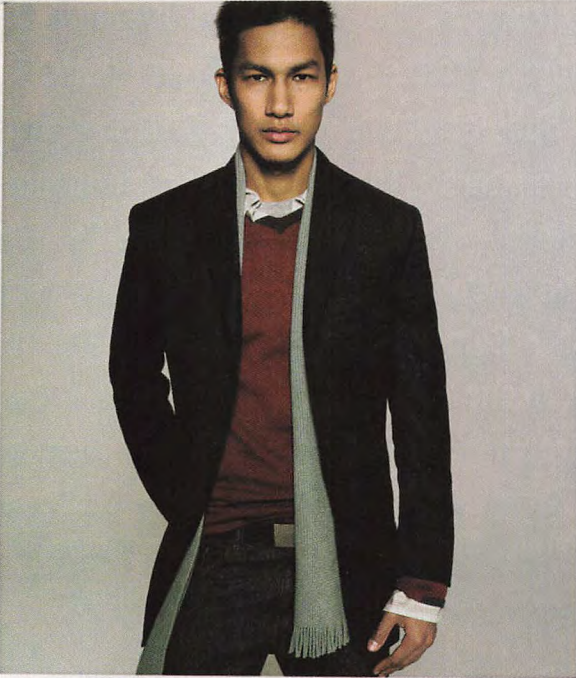


I fall at least once a day.



Can cry on the spot.

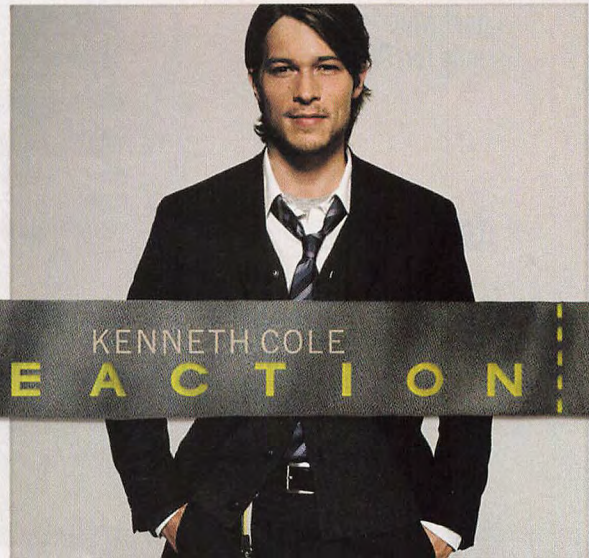
I don't do elevators.



Once kissed a frog. Didn't work.



Have maxed out my credit cards.



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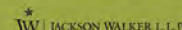
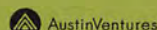
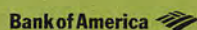
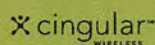
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FEATURES

70 THE LIBERTINES

England's brashest, ballsiest band stormed the U.S. two years ago with a debut hailed as an instant classic. Now, after crack addiction, burglary, prison time and intraband warfare, they're back. Except for the lead singer, of course. . . .

78 ASHLEE SIMPSON

Jessica's little sis, with her own reality show and a debut album on the way, turns out to be anything but a good-girl wallflower — what with her penchant for public nudity and her admission that she's got a "great rack." All right!

86 \$848: NEW FOUND GLORY

These emo-metallers took our scratch to the California shore, picking up beach-party essentials on the way: surfboards, burgers, booze and . . . adult diapers?

89 THE ULTIMATE ROCK & ROLL QUIZ

Sure, you know who wrote "Purple Rain" and who played bass for the Beatles. But which famous rock god kept his urine and toenail clippings in the fridge? From sex to drugs to sheer insanity, *Blender* presents the finest in esoteric music trivia. Class dismissed!

102 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Busted marriages, too much booze, fans they can't stand: It's been a hard slog for Southern-rock scion Patterson Hood and his band. Now they're on the cusp of big-time success, but Hood's cranky. "I still ain't makin' shit!" he gripes. Except terrific new albums, that is.

108 USHER

The hip-hop Love God on what it's like when a girl asks you to "pop her cherry," making love to his own records, how he's not sure about bondage . . . and how he'd like there to be a town named Usher.

120 FAN FASHION

We hit four shows — No Doubt, D12, Morrissey and the Scissor Sisters — and snapped the styles sported by the fans outside. Consider it your sartorial template for a rockin' fall.

ON THE COVER



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58

"If a guy makes me mad, I'll scream in his face." **AVRIL LAVIGNE**



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REGULARS

24 EDITOR'S LETTER

26 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

34 BURNER

A guerrilla art campaign protests the Iraq war by parodying iPod; Xtina brands herself; 50 Cent is unlucky in love; a Ray Charles appreciation; and more!

38 THE NEXT BIG THING!

Skye Sweetnam;
Taking Back Sunday

58 DEAR SUPERSTAR

Multiplatinum punkette Avril Lavigne answers your queries about her fears, her taste in men and how she treats her dyspeptic fans: "He mouthed off, so I kneed him in the balls!" Oooooof.

64 THE GREATEST SONGS EVER!

Joni Mitchell penned "Free Man in Paris" about one of the most famous record execs in music history. He hated the song. It became her biggest hit. Bad move, Mr. Famous Record Exec!

68 ASK BLENDER

Was Whitney Houston a Bond girl? Why was Elvis Costello banned from SNL? Whose suicide did Filter "honor" in a hit single? You ask, we answer. You can thank us later.

180 WHO DOES GRETCHEN WILSON THINK SHE IS?

The country sensation is mean as a snake when she drinks whiskey, so she gave that up. Yet just last night she was dancing on a bar and singing "Redneck Woman." "I'm obnoxious!" she exults. Double all right!

70

L "Very deranged and murky few days . . . What is going on?" THE LIBERTINES' PETE DOHERTY



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THE GUIDE

130 NEW RELEASES

The Libertines, Ray Charles, Ashlee Simpson, 213, Drive-By Truckers and more

146 CHART

148 MY MUSIC

Charmed doyenne Rose McGowan used to date Marilyn Manson, but her musical tastes run gentler: Patsy Cline, Sinatra, Dolly Parton. Well, Nick Cave, too: "I like his songs where women get killed!" Manson's influence, no doubt.

150 REISSUES

Van Halen, X, the Notorious B.I.G., Jeff Buckley, Megadeth and more

162 BACK CATALOG

Iggy Pop

166 LIVE!

Madonna; the Shins; Fantasy Island

170 MOVIES

172 DVDS

174 BOOKS

176 GAMES

178 CROSSWORD/CARTOON

78

"I know exactly what's under this T-shirt." ASHLEE SIMPSON



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To Air Is Human

ONE OF THE great things about being a world-famous music-magazine editor is, of course, all the cool swag I get sent. But one of the other, slightly less great things is the opportunity it gives me to support up-and-coming musicians, or even up-and-comers who are just *pretending* to be musicians.

Which is why I was mildly happy to act as a judge at the recent New York heat of the USA Air Guitar Championships.

For those not familiar with this noble but utterly pointless contest, let me explain. Participants have one minute to mime along to any heavy-rock record they wish while trying to demonstrate "airness," defined in the rules as "the extent to which an air-guitar performance transcends an imitation of a real art form and becomes an art form in and of itself."

Perhaps it was the way she did the splits mid-solo, or maybe it was her schoolgirl outfit or her tendency to flash her Hello Kitty panties at the crowd, but MiRi "Sonyk Rok" Park romped home with her spirited interpretation of Van Halen's "Hot for Teacher."

She did not know it then, but she would scoop the national title, too. As of press time, she is on her way to Finland to compete against the best air musicians in the world.

When I congratulated Park backstage, she seemed elated — but also, I sensed, oddly ashamed.

"Now I have to explain to my parents what I've been doing," she said thoughtfully.

"They'll get over it," I said encouragingly.

Whether they will or not, I obviously have no idea. Enjoy the issue!

ANDY PEMBERTON
EDITOR IN CHIEF

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You've Got Mail

WE WANT YOU TO SHARE...



THANK YOU, RAY

Thank you, *Blender*, for honoring the wonderful Ray Charles with the spine lyric on your August issue: "A song of you/Comes as sweet and clear/As moonlight through the pines," from the classic "Georgia on My Mind."

BEN PAINO, NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

And thank you, Ben, for spotting that. It makes it all worthwhile.

NICE NOD

That was a nice nod to Parliament/Funkadelic fans with the upside-down lyric printed on the back page of your August issue: "It's good to be hard/But it's hard to be good" is from P-Funk's "Nothing Before Me but Thang." Thanks!

JACKIE TUNRON, WATERLOO, IOWA

WHAAAT?

Regarding the cover story in which you guys did a Q&A interview with Comedy Central's Dave Chappelle ["Dave Chappelle's Wild Ride," August], all I can say is yyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!

PAUL CIFINE, INDIO, CALIFORNIA

Oh-kaaaaaaaaaay!

IGNORANT

I hate how celebrities think they can mouth off on politics. What the hell does Dave Chappelle know about Iraq? Oh, yeah: a hell of a lot more than our president does.

MARIA AHMAD, BROKEN BOW, NEBRASKA

GREAT BIG BALLS

You guys have the biggest balls of any publication I know. To print on a consistent basis your low opinion of the Doors and Jim Morrison is truly ballsy. Don't get me wrong: I love the Doors. No other mag can do it, though. They all just love the flavor of the moment. So keep those balls swinging all over the place... just nowhere near me.

BRYAN BRICKNER, LOMITA, CALIFORNIA

LISTEN UP!

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Dave Chappelle: "Man, it's amazing what you can buy at a garage sale!"

YOU BASTARDS!

I've been buying *Blender* from the store for about half a year now. I haven't subscribed — the mailman has confessed to taking interesting magazines instead of delivering them — and some months, it has come down to either rent money or your magazine. I live with my parents now. So thanks, you bastards, for not letting me have sex.

SANFORD K., CALGARY, ALBERTA

SWEARING!

In the June/July issue of *Blender*, I learned who makes the music for porn movies, that Janet Jackson can swear like a sailor and that the White Stripes' Jack White looks like Michael Jackson! Who says reading ain't informative?

CRYSTAL JOHNSON, LONGVIEW, TEXAS

BALLS, AGAIN

In a world where censors are starting to take over so much that you can no longer say the word *pants* in a video on MTV (Avril Lavigne's "Don't Tell Me"), I take great pleasure in reading *Blender*.

Not only do you not censor artists such as Janet Jackson in profiles of them, you even print articles about porn music and a new band called Unclefucker. I'd like to thank you for not getting caught up in the rest of the country's hysteria and for not being afraid to have some balls. If it weren't for people like you, Dave Chappelle and Will Ferrell, I'd have to

consider moving to Canada. Oh, by the way, if you choose to print this letter, I think that picture of Moby with a sock over his penis would be a nice visual to go along with it. Just a thought.

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ASS-SUCKING

Each time I read *Blender*, I learn something — and not just about music. For instance, in the Franz Ferdinand profile you guys published in your August issue [The *Blender* 100], I learned what a bizarre place Scotland is. I was particularly interested to read about the band's drummer being paid to have the fat sucked out of his ass. How different from America, where people *pay* to have the fat sucked out of their asses!

RACHEL McCaULEY, FLINT, MICHIGAN

REVOLTING FOOD

Mike Skinner from the Streets may think that he's not "hard enough," as he put it, to emulate Snoop Dogg [The *Blender* 100]. But I'll bet that the Snoopmeister has never done anything remotely as tough as eating food from a British "fish bar" like Skinner was pictured doing. What do they serve at places like that — boiled fish eyes and lard?

TIM DIAZ, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Only on special occasions.

POLITICAL BIAS!

In your June/July issue, I noticed what seemed to be a distinct political agenda. Granted, I understand that these are people's quotations, but it still came across as a theme. On page 76, Slipknot's Corey Taylor refers to President Bush as "dumber than a bag of hammers." On page 80, Chingy expresses his desire to punch the



The Streets' Mike Skinner:
"Mmm . . . lard."

★ LETTERS

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Amanda Phillips and
the Cure's Robert Smith



★ STALK YOUR FAVORITE pop star much more effectively with the Philips key ring camera. All you need to do is send us shots of you with your favorite star — if we like what you take, we'll print it, and you'll get a Philips Digital Camera Key Ring like the one pictured to the left! Send us your pics, and please include your name, address and a phone number where we can reach you.

president in the jaw. On page 82, Maroon 5's Adam Levine makes the claim that "George Bush is a douchebag." On page 92, the Beastie Boys' Mike D encourages everyone to vote Bush out of office. On page 112, in the midst of declaring Democratic nominee John Kerry one of the most rock & roll politicians ever, you feel the need to tell us that Moby, at a Kerry fundraiser, recently called President Bush "an evil fuck." Plus, you left Bush off the rock & roll politicians list altogether, even though he . . . well, OK, he

was a cheerleader in college. Never mind; I get your point there. Meanwhile, in the Janet Jackson cover story, you seemingly blame the overblown reaction to the Super Bowl fiasco on the Republican party simply because this is an election year. I'm a huge fan of *Blender*. I'm a subscriber and I'm not planning on changing that any time soon, but I implore you: You're a *music* magazine — please check your politics at the door and focus on the music. Thank you.

CHRIS RAY, GREENVILLE, GEORGIA →

Dear Ketel One Drinker
Here is the recipe for our signature
cocktail:

Take one part Ketel One
Add nothing
Drink.

YOUR CONNECTION IS FAST.

BUT

IS IT FAST,

AND ORGANIZED,

AND EASY,

AND NEED WE

ASK ABOUT

COOL CONTENT?



The Hives eat the fifth member of the band.

TWISTED DEGENERATES!

So a normal night for the Hives ["Let's Go and Shoot Things!", August] is eating herring and watching porn? Thank you, *Blender*, for confirming my suspicion that these so-called "musicians" are a bunch of twisted degenerates. Eating herring is disgusting!

JANEY SHERMAN, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

I AM SEXUALLY ACTIVE!

As a plumber, I would just like to say that if Dave Chappelle is right that the worst comic gets laid more than the best plumber, then the worst comic is getting quite a lot of action.

PETER L., MECHANICSVILLE, NEW JERSEY



The Cure's Robert Smith finishes in the bathroom.

HEAD SHANK!

I would like to point out that the idea that the Cure's Robert Smith [Dear Superstar, August] claims to be a regular viewer of *NYPD Blue* has totally fucked with my head.

ELISA D'AFFERIO, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Then brace yourself for the news that Morrissey apparently adores *CSI*. (Ha! Fooled you — the Moz is, of course, "all about" *Without a Trace*.)

MY TERRIBLE SHAME

Thank you for making me aware of my horrible taste in music. After reading *Blender*'s list of the 50 Worst Songs of All Time [May] and watching VH1's corresponding show, *The 50 Most Awesomely Bad Songs*... Ever, all I can feel is shame: shame over the fact that I actually *like* at least 10 of the songs on the list. I will now consult *Blender* for all of my future music needs.

ALLISON WEST, LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA

IF POP STARS WERE DOGS...



BUTCH, THE DOG >>>> ALICE COOPER, THE POP STAR

WIN ME!



DOES YOUR DOG RESEMBLE A POP STAR?

Send us a photo with your name and address and who your dog is supposed to be. If we print your photo, you'll win a sweet JVC satellite radio plus three months of Sirius Satellite Radio service — on us!

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET USERS MEET YOUR ONE-STOP WONDER.

Add AOL® for Broadband® on top of your basic high-speed Internet connection, and get a whole lot more from your online experience. AOL for Broadband brings all the stuff you want to one place. From live, original concerts to on-demand sports highlights, from Parental Controls to a personal firewall, and from e-mail to AOL® Bill Pay, it's right there – and it all works together – for an easier, more organized experience. So high-speed Internet users

MEET



To sign up, call 1-888-AOL-4-YOU or visit aol.com

Requires purchase of a high-speed connection. High-speed connections not available in all areas. Personal firewall requires separate download at AOL Keyword: Firewall Express. Must be 18 or older to register; major billing method required. America Online, AOL, the Running Man Icon, and the Triangle Logo are all registered trademarks of America Online, Inc. AOL for Broadband is a trademark of America Online, Inc. © 2004 America Online, Inc. All rights reserved.

BLENDER TO ALL OUR FRIENDS!

NEXT ISSUE

GENUFLECT! YOU
ARE IN THE BUBBLY
PRESENCE OF

HILARY DUFF

POP GODDESS!

BEYONCÉ
SNOOP DOGG
TUPAC
U2
CHRISTINA
AGUILERA
BRITNEY
SPEARS

ON SALE
TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 21

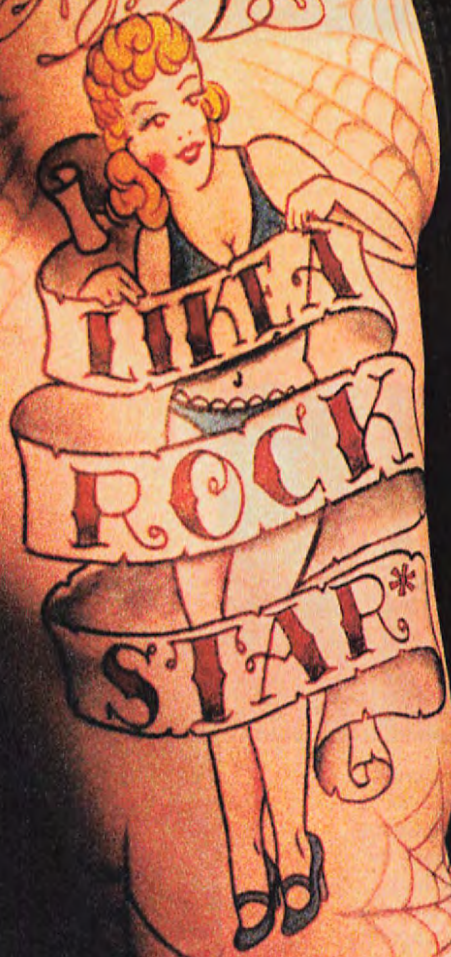


VINTAGE T-SHIRT FROM WASTELAND;
LA: GOLD CHAIN WITH CHARMS FROM
ERIKA COURTNEY; VINTAGE CHARM
FROM APT. 3; BELT BY STÜSSY;
SHORTS BY KRISTEN JOHNSON;
VINTAGE BRACELETS FROM APT. 3

Danielle Levitt

For complete rules and to enter to win, visit www.oldsponge.com. No purchase necessary. ©2004 P&G

Live a
Day Night



hang with the
RED ZONE
Girls
PRIVATE JET
TO THE SHOW
CHILL BACKSTAGE
WITH THE BAND
BE IN STUDIO
WITH A
RECORDING ARTIST
\$500 BUCKS



* **BUT DON'T SMELL LIKE A ROADIE.** ENTER TO WIN AT OLDSPICE.COM.

SPICE THINGS UP.

Old Spice

BURNER

★ BOWIE'S LOLLIPOP ★ 50 CENT'S LADYFRIENDS ★ XTINA'S \$TUFF

iProtest!

Maverick artists co-opt Apple's iPod advertising imagery to oppose the war in Iraq

★ STRIKING PARODIES of iPod ads have started appearing on city streets.

In New York and Los Angeles, anti-war protesters have plastered walls and billboards with subversive versions of Apple Computer's iconic advertising campaign.

The most haunting spoofs feature the silhouetted image of a hooded Iraqi prisoner with fake electrodes attached to his fingers. Set against a fluorescent colored backdrop, the wires are white, suggesting iPod headphones. On each ad, *iPod* has been changed to *iRaq*.

"This is not an attack on Apple," said one of the two artists for Forkscrew Graphics, the Los Angeles-based design company that produced and distributed the mock ads



"iRaq" posters in Manhattan (next to Will Ferrell in *Anchorman*)

in California this summer. The artist wished to remain anonymous.

"We are interested in seeing George W. Bush vacate the White House," he said. "And to remind people to look closer at what the hell's going on before you dive in and start cheering, shooting and dying."

Circulated by at least two separate groups, different "iRaq" posters had begun appearing on New York City billboards by June.

"They're clever and well-made, but they're being placed in urban centers for people who already agree with the sentiment — they're preaching to the choir," countered Jonah Goldberg, the editor of *National Review Online* and a supporter of the war. "What could the impact possibly be?"

An Apple representative contacted by *Blender* said the company was aware of the pirate ads but declined further comment. **JONAH WEINER**



Courtesy of Forkscrew Graphics (iRaq posters)

Forkscrew Graphics designed four mock ads and posted them in New York and L.A.

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers

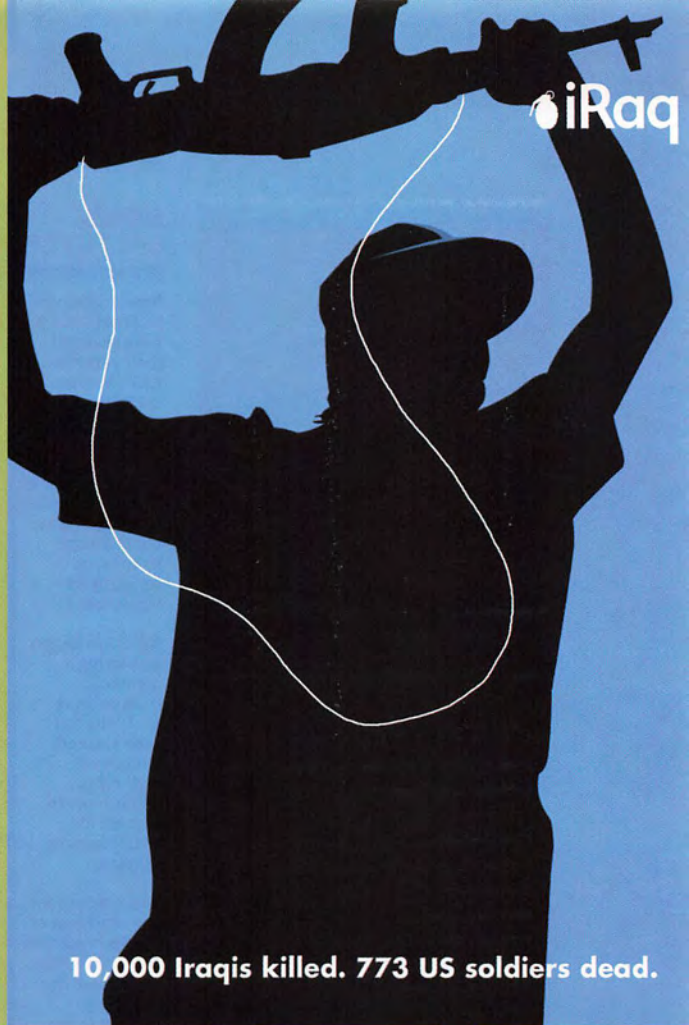


iers dead.



iRaq

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.

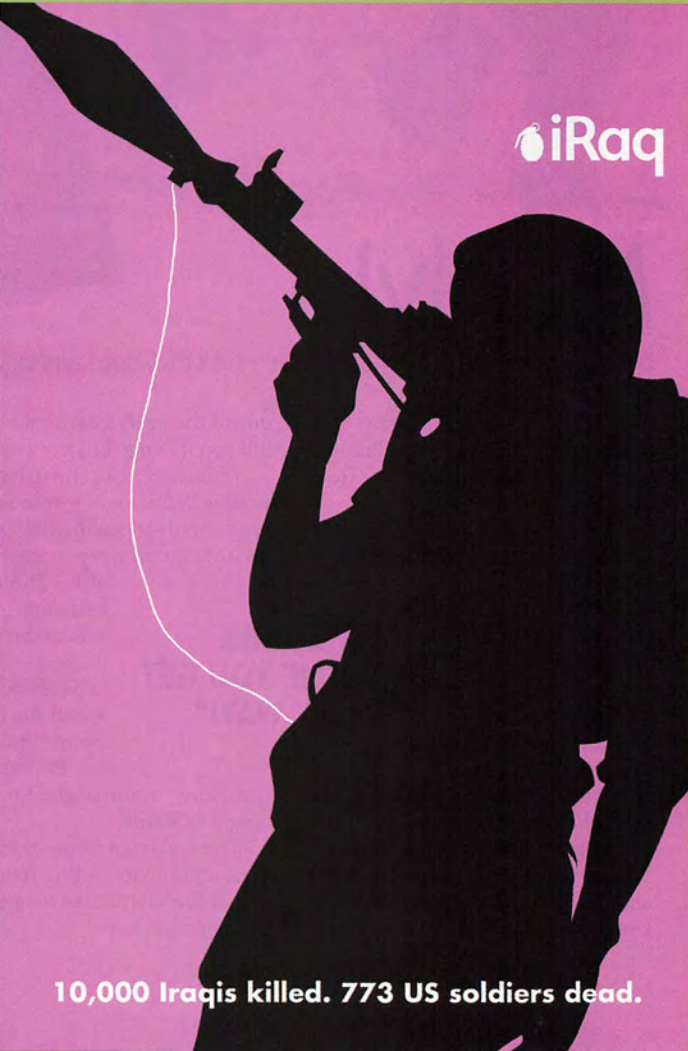


iRaq

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.

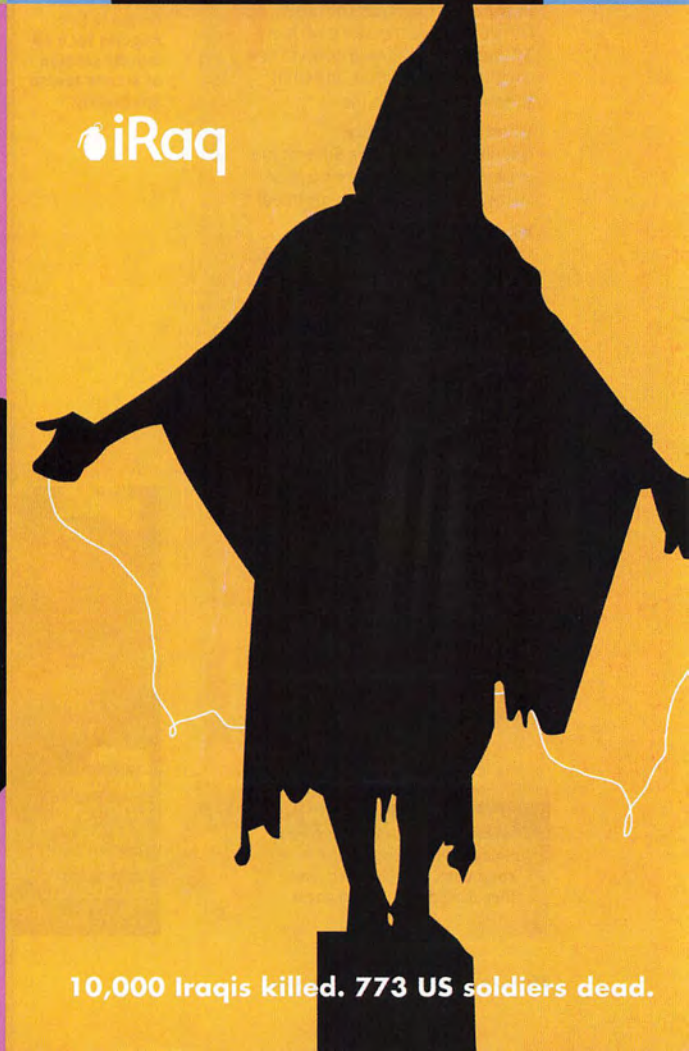


iers dead.



iRaq

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.



iRaq

10,000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.



He was the wacky one.

DO YOU ROCK?

Rick Nielsen

Does the tarantula-eating Cheap Trick guitarist... rock?

Ever trashed a hotel room?

At the Rio in Las Vegas, we threw a big-screen TV through the window.

Biggest celebrity's home that you've ever gotten drunk in?

Gene Simmons! He pulled a gun on me. I was so scared I went into his bathroom and pissed in the shower.

Ever had a brush with the law?

I drove my Porsche 100 mph in a 30-mph zone. I slowed down to see what the cops wanted, and what they wanted... was me.

Worst rock & roll injury?

Opening for Kiss at the Silverdome in Detroit, someone threw a Jack Daniel's bottle, and it hit my head!

Worst tour horror story?

Once I got so sick that I ran offstage crapping and throwing up at the same time. It was kind of cool.

Biggest celeb in your cellphone?

[Beatles producer] George Martin.

Ever been declared legally dead?

Just career-wise. More than once.

Extravagant hobby?

Guitars! I have more than 300.

Stupidest thing you've ever eaten?

In Kansas we had tarantulas. One of them died, so I deep-fried it, dipped it in chocolate and ate it. DAVE HILL



VERDICT

PISSING IN GENE SIMMONS'S SHOWER SEALS IT:
RICK NIELSEN ROCKS BIG-TIME!

→ CHEAP TRICK'S LIVE CONCERT DVD, FROM TOKYO TO YOU (BIG 3), IS OUT NOW.

WHERE'S COURTNEY?

Hours late for a recent New York court date, Love declared, and then denied, she was pregnant.



NEWS ROUNDUP!

Russian pseudo-lesbians **T.A.T.U.** have changed their name to **t.E.m.A.** after splitting with their manager, who retains the rights to the old name. According to Russian daily newspaper *Utro*, the pair hope to be taken seriously as musicians.

JAY-Z has begun employing a personal chicken-wing chef, who has even entered kitchens at high-class restaurants to prepare his boss's favorite specialty.

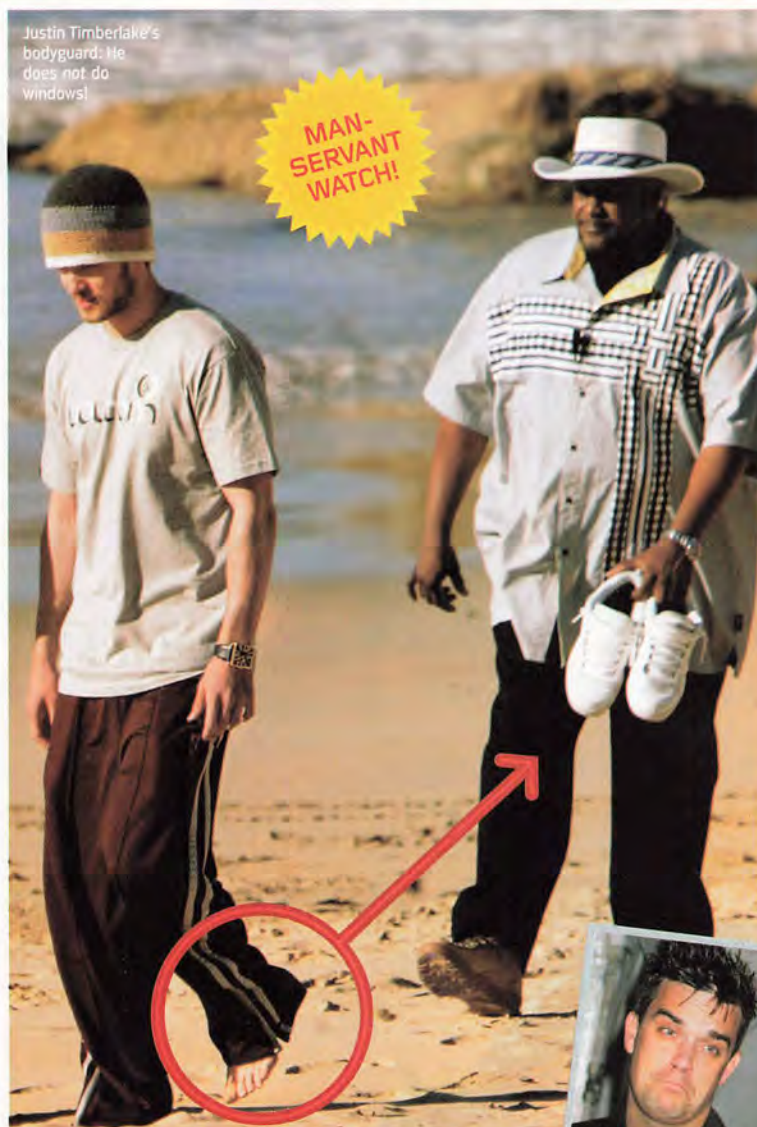
Hours before the opening night of her Re-Invention Tour, **MADONNA** summoned her Kabbalah teacher to the Forum in Los Angeles for a 40-minute session of arcane Jewish spirituality.

WORD!



"I am a great husband. I believe I'm an excellent husband."
BOBBY BROWN

Justin Timberlake's bodyguard. He does not do windows!



MAN-SERVANT WATCH!



Robbie Williams's security team provides company.

Manly!

Bodyguards carry shoes, threaten lives, tuck their pop stars in. Cute!

★ ADULT POP STARS Justin Timberlake and Robbie Williams have been receiving extra care from their bodyguards.

Timberlake's bodyguard carried the singer's sneakers while taking a stroll on Sydney, Australia's Manly Beach during a stop on Timberlake's *Justified* tour.

In addition to toting footwear, Timberlake's security contingent took steps to protect their charge by threatening the life of a photographer who had aimed his camera at the 23-year-old singer and his girlfriend, actress Cameron Diaz. "I'm not from this country,"

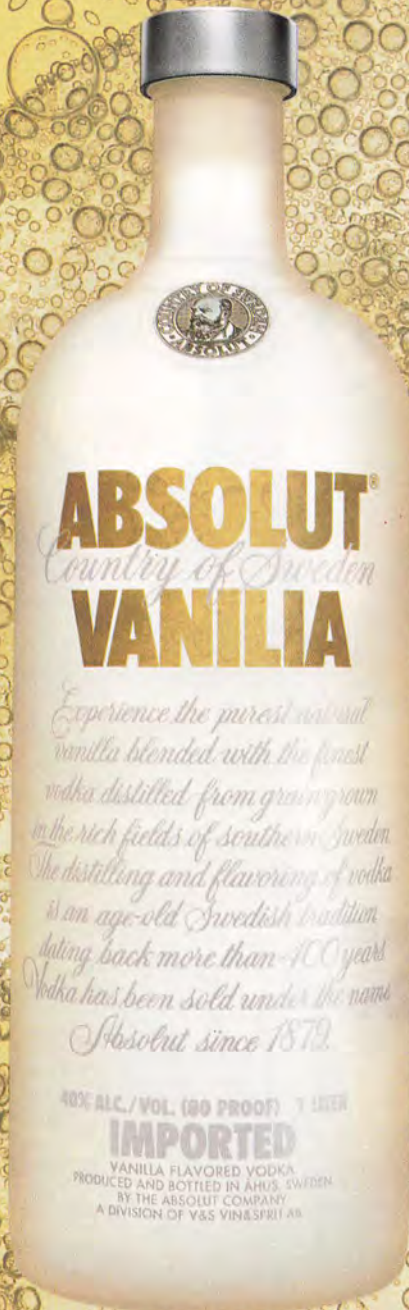
one of the beefy guards said. "I will kill you if you get in my way!"

In related news, British pop star Robbie Williams, 30, who is suffering from depression, insists that a security guard sleep in the bedroom of his Hollywood mansion — on a sofa at the foot of his bed — because he is afraid to spend the night alone. "Robbie needs constant

company," a source close to the singer explains.

The bodyguard does not, however, accompany Williams when the singer has alternative nocturnal partners. NOEL BODDIE

"I WILL KILL YOU IF YOU GET IN MY WAY!"



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THE NEXT BIG THING!

Skye Sweetnam

This star-in-waiting was discovered in a beauty salon. Sweet!

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KENNETH CAPPELLO

FIRST THERE WAS Alanis Morissette, then Nelly Furtado and Avril Lavigne. Now comes another young, pop-friendly female Canadian: Skye Sweetnam. Before Britney Spears injured her knee, the 16-year-old was the opening act on her Onyx Hotel tour.

"She's a sweet girl. She's so... Southern," she says, refusing to be drawn in by rumors that Spears was experiencing a meltdown.

Sweetnam grew up in Bolton, Ontario (population 21,000), and despite having a stay-at-home mother and a father who runs a gravel business, she always had music coursing through her veins. What follows is her version — possibly disingenuous — of how she landed her record deal. Ready?

"It all started when my mom forgot to sign me up for snowboarding camp when I was 12," she says breathlessly, "so I went to Pop Stars camp instead. One of the counselors introduced me to her producer husband, and we did this demo. Then my grandmother's hairdresser invited me to perform at his salon, and one of the customers introduced me to her brother, an entertainment lawyer. He hooked me up with the guy who became my manager. Cool, huh?"

The result is *Noise From the Basement*, a perky pop-rock album, cowritten by Sweetnam, that she insists is influenced by Frank Zappa, Pantera and the musical *Cats*.

"You hear about bands working for 15 years out of a van, and how hard it was for them," she muses, "and that makes me wonder if I've earned all that's happened to me." Her personal security guard wanders past, and she waves. "I guess I'm just lucky." [BLENDER]

**PERKY POP INSPIRED
BY FRANK ZAPPA,
PANTERA AND CATS.**

ALL ABOUT ME!

BIRTHDATE
May 5, 1988

OBSSESSIONS
"Filming with my video camera, and multicolored Sharpies."

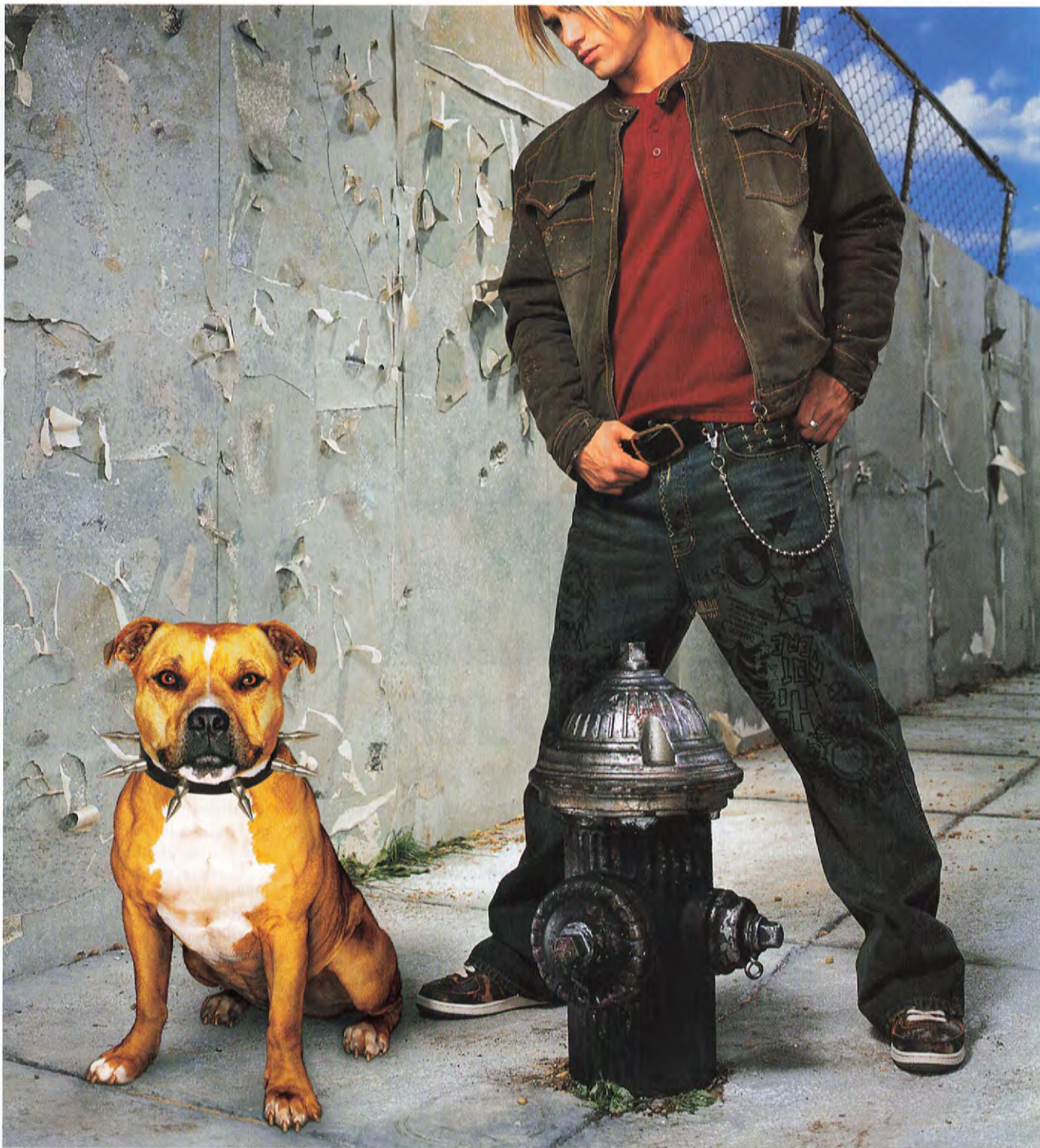
FAVORITE SONG RIGHT NOW BY ANY ARTIST
"Take Me Out," by Franz Ferdinand

MOST DIVA-LIKE DEMAND
"Muuuum, can you take my gum?"

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY WHILE LISTENING
"Having a pillow fight."

OUT NOW NOISE FROM THE BASEMENT CAPITOL

PLUGG JEANS CO. plugg.com



PLUGG®

— CONNECTED —

Bob Dylan, before he was a Victoria's Secret party salesman



NOW HEAR THIS!

Three music nabobs select songs the world really needs to hear



KIRK HAMMETT
BOB DYLAN,
"POSITIVELY
4TH STREET"

"Coming from my background of rock and heavy metal and

then blues and jazz, I wasn't really hip to folk music in general. But when I heard this, it totally blew me away. I don't know if it's popular, but it's an amazing song that everyone should know about."



MELISSA AUF DER MAUR
FAILURE,
"SGT. POLITENESS"

"This comes off *Fantastic Planet*, an album that came out

in 1996. It's got a heavy, unique riff that's also very melodic. Anyone who likes heavy mid-'90s alt-rock would like this; it's just a glossier approach to that type of music. Musicians love these guys, but they're one of those bands that fell by the wayside before they ever really made it."



BONE CRUSHER
KILLER MIKE,
"RE-AKSHON"

"I did the hook on this song, and I must say it's the epitome of crunk. It bubbled in

the South, but if the label came out with a video or something fresh with that, Killer Mike would be back on the map with this one. It's both pop and street, and it's crazy."

STEVE KANDELL AND LAUREN HARRIS

NEWS ROUNDUP!

At a recent New Hampshire show, **JEWEL** reportedly told the audience to stop staring at her teeth and to look at her breasts. The kooky singer also responded to a shouted song request by saying, "Shut the hell up!" In a 10-minute monologue, she then mentioned the antidepressants Paxil and Zoloft.

SIMON COWELL has advised **VICTORIA BECKHAM** to quit her singing career following her ill-fated collaboration with **DAMON DASH**. "Fashion is definitely what she should be concentrating her energies on," he said.

P. DIDDY has revealed his secret to looking good: a long bath with numerous salts and beads. "I also lotion myself head to toe and walk around naked for 10 minutes to air-dry," he said.

WORD!



"I have to work out hard to be as hot as I am."

GWEN STEFANI



June 18:
A fan tosses a
lollipop — and
hits Bowie!

Ouch!

A flying lollipop lodges itself in David Bowie's eye!

★ **DAVID BOWIE** HAD to stop midway through his third song at the Norwegian Wood Festival in Oslo, Norway, when an airborne lollipop landed in his left eye.

Though Bowie was not seriously injured — a roadie helped him dislodge the stick stuck between his eyeball and eyelid — the singer, 57, lashed out at the candy-throwing fan for hurling the lollipop and then hiding in the audience.

Once his anger subsided, Bowie

joked about the incident by flinging guitar picks into the crowd of 7,500 and playing another two hours.

"Luckily, you hit the bad one," he told the crowd, referring to a childhood injury in which his left eye was permanently dilated and its color changed from blue to hazel.

After the show, the offending fan, a woman in her thirties, insisted that the lollipop was accidentally knocked out of her hand by someone next to her. **STEVE KANDELL**



A roadie
assesses
the
damage.

POP STAR MUST-HAVE

BIG SMILES!

Projecting uncontrollable happiness is a must in the high-stakes world of celebrity



JESSICA SIMPSON



BRANDY



MANDY MOORE



MACY GRAY



ASHANTI

Curve Crush

SEE WHERE IT
TAKES YOU... NOW.



FROM CURVE... NEW FRAGRANCES
FOR HIM. FOR HER. FOR NOW.

Macy's Robinsons-May Filene's Kaufmann's Rich's-Macy's
Lazarus-Macy's Goldsmith's-Macy's



for HIM | for HER

www.curvefragnances.com



Please buy my crap!

BRANDED!

Xtina unleashes a landslide of potential new products

LAWYERS FOR pop star and entrepreneur Christina Aguilera have filed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office a list of 450 products — including antiperspirants and badminton sets — to be branded with her famous name.

Having already sold more than 8 million copies of her latest CD, *Stripped*, Aguilera is looking to capitalize on her fans' love of her music by selling them crayons, contact lenses, modeling clay and skiwear, as well as such items as "electronic multi-activity toys" for "education" purposes and her own line of lingerie.

The singer, however, has no plans to shill piercings; she recently removed most of her own. "I was rebelling," she said. "I've taken out all my piercings, apart from one in my right nipple. That's for me." STEVE KANDELL

TELL US A JOKE!

CHINGY

"What do they call your mama, 'cause she's got one leg and one eye? Eileen!"

AS TOLD TO HARRY BALZAC

NEWS ROUNDUP!

EMINEM bought his brother Nate an extravagant eighteenth-birthday present recently: a \$15,000 home recording studio. "I want to do music, too," Nate explained.

PINK was reportedly so impressed with **BRAD PITT**'s body in the movie *Troy* that she has hired his personal trainer.

TRENT REZNOR and his former manager John Malm are suing each other for millions of dollars. Claiming the musician had refused to pay Malm \$2 million he was owed, the manager's suit claimed: "Reznor stabbed Malm in the back with a nine-inch nail."



Neil with Corey Feldman (right) in *The Surreal Life*



Vince Neil will seek help from a lifestyle counselor for his comeback reality TV show.

Creepy!

Mötley Crüe's Vince Neil goes under the knife for a comeback

WORD!



"It's a little like being at Grandma's for dinner."

LINKIN PARK'S CHESTER BENNINGTON, ON PLAYING IN SINGAPORE, WHERE CURSING IS VERBODEN

★ **FORMER MÖTLEY CRÜE** front-man Vince Neil is the subject of a new reality makeover show currently being planned by VH1. Provisionally titled *The Remaking of Vince Neil*, the series would give the hair-metal singer the chance to make a comeback with the help of trainers, rock producers, lifestyle counselors and, reportedly, a plastic surgeon.

This is not the first reality show on which Neil has appeared. Last year, he starred in the WB's *The Surreal Life*, in which he lived in a house with fellow celebrities MC Hammer, Emmanuel Lewis and Corey Feldman, among others.

In the third episode, Neil competed against his castmates in a talent show and won.

Since Mötley Crüe split up in 1999, two battery charges have kept the singer in the headlines. Last

year, after failing to contest an alleged "choking" incident involving a Nevada prostitute, he received a 30-day suspended sentence

and was ordered to successfully complete an anger-management correspondence course.

In 2002, he was charged with attacking a record producer outside a Hollywood nightclub. The case was eventually dismissed. STEVE LOWE

NEIL IS STARRING IN A NEW REALITY TV SHOW.

Crowd pleasers.

No wonder everyone loves Audiovox. Just look at that slim-line portable DVD player. Our beautiful 20" flat-panel TV. Or our ingenious new GMR5500SLK slim-line 2-way radio. Come on, join the crowd. Go to www.audiovox.com, or call 1-800-645-4994.



Audiovox

ALL YOUR FAVORITE TURN-ONS.



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IDEAL ACTIVITY PERFORMED WHILE LISTENING
"Sweet, sweet lovin'akin."

FAVORITE DVD ON THE TOUR BUS
"Zoolander and anything Family Guy."

"TAKING BACK SUNDAY" MEANS...
"It's a subdivision of varicose veins that pulse with the intimate findings of 13-year-old bodies intertwined for the first time."

ASHLEE OR JESSICA SIMPSON?
"We prefer Marge!"

THE NEXT BIG THING!

Taking Back Sunday

This New York band doesn't make "boobie music" — rockin'!

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON TANAKA BLANEY

ADAM LAZZARA'S modest Brooklyn apartment hasn't seen a vacuum cleaner in some time, and for good reason. The Taking Back Sunday frontman has been in the U.K. promoting his band's second CD, *Where You Want to Be*. Upon his return, going to bars — many, many bars — superseded cleaning house. With a look that suggests a bomb is going off inside his head, the High Point, North Carolina, native surveys *Blender* with mild anxiety.

"Oh, hi," he croaks. "It's... you know... um?" A hand comes up to his mouth to catch an abrasive cough. "Sorry. It's the, the hangover."

Eyes hiding behind lank hair, the frontman eases into a sofa and forces a smile. "Sorry," he says again.

If Lazzara, 22, seems the apologetic type — and he is, begging forgiveness for almost everything today — his band, which formed in New York five years ago, is mercifully more assertive. Their blistering 2002 debut, *Tell All Your Friends*, suggested that they were a genuine post-grunge rock force. The five-piece, all in their mid-twenties, spent their tortured adolescent years dreaming of replacing geekdom with stardom, but the big time didn't suit original members Shaun Cooper (bass) and John Nolan (guitar), both of whom quit as the record notched its 350,000th sale.

"No, I don't hate those guys," Lazzara says, shrugging, "but I did think it was the end of us."

Instead, Taking Back Sunday enlisted new members and, he insists, became a better band. Their new album is like a more tuneful Metallica, with bruising rock anthems that hint at paranoia, loathing and despair. Surprisingly, then, given the band's dark temperament, they've been touring with pop-punkers Blink-182.

"But we don't make boobie music like those guys," Lazzara says. [blender]

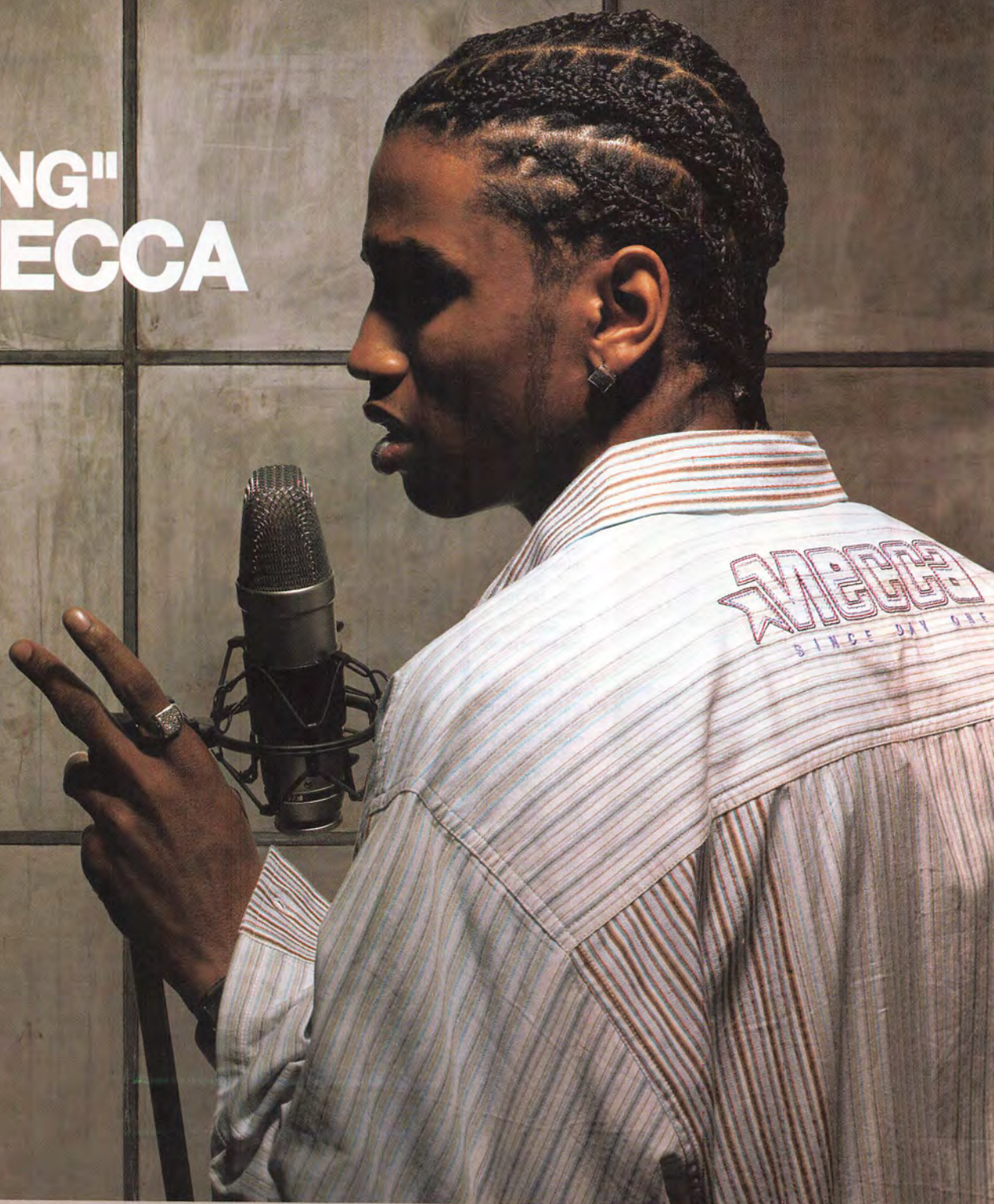
ROCK ANTHEMS THAT HINT AT PARANOIA, LOATHING AND DESPAIR.



Taking Back Sunday, clockwise from bottom: Eddie Reyes, Matt Rubano, Mark O'Connell, Adam Lazzara, Fred Mascherino

OUT NOW WHERE YOU WANT TO BE VICTORY

"I SING" MECCA



www.trey-songz.com

www.meccausa.com



Trey Songz: Atlantic Recording Artist
Album in Stores January '05



MECCA

WHEN WILL YOUR FAVORITE POP STAR CROAK?

Caterpillar eyebrows give a more youthful appearance.

#11

LIL' KIM

CURRENT AGE 29

AVERAGE AMERICAN'S LIFE EXPECTANCY 79

CATEGORY YEARS ADDED/SUBTRACTED

African-American female +3

May have had some work done (fondness for self-improvement) +5

Maybe a little too much work done... -5

High-risk sexual behavior, often involving guns... if her lyrics are to be believed -9

Perjury indictments (from her posse's run-in with Foxy Brown's posse) -1

First female member of Junior M.A.F.I.A. (providing a sense of family she never had) +2

Impulse to expose self in front of cameras (empty attention-seeking) -1

Role in *Scary Movie* left on cutting-room floor (thwarted ambitions) -1

Hard-knock life: abusive dad, homeless at age 9, drug use -7

Mourned the death of her soul mate, Biggie Smalls -1

Too confrontational for her own good? "I wanna start burnin' down niggaz' cribs!" -1

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY 63

PROJECTED YEAR OF DEATH 2038

GERONTOLOGIST DR. DEMKO SAYS: "Despite a larger-than-life, high-maintenance lifestyle, Kim's anger management has allowed her to survive a rough upbringing and find huge financial success."

NEWS ROUNDUP!

AVRIL LAVIGNE has blasted **BRITNEY SPEARS'**s wardrobe as too provocative. "You should dress like that for your boyfriend, not for the world," she said.

PAUL MCCARTNEY has admitted he tried heroin, but only by accident after being handed a cigarette laced with the drug. "It didn't do anything for me," he said. "Which was lucky, because I wouldn't have fancied heading down that road."

ANDRÉ 3000 has cast aside his professed desire to leave the music industry and is currently working on "hardcore" new **OUTKAST** material. According to bandmate **BIG BOI**, the album features the eccentric André rapping rather than singing. "He's back!" Big Boi enthused.

WORD!



"I see too much with my eyes, and I feel too much with my soul."

FRED DURST

50 Cent called Alicia Keys — but no cigar.



Denied!

50 Cent looks for love in all the wrong places

★ HIS 2003 DEBUT album, *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, may have sold 6 million copies, but 50 Cent still can't get a date.

After striking out with Alicia Keys — a barrage of phone calls from 50 himself and members of his G-Unit posse pleading with her to "collaborate on a track" proved fruitless — the rapper set his sights

on British singer Ms. Dynamite. He made a play for the rising dance-music star at a London club, but the new mom rebuffed his advances. Undaunted, 50 and his DJ sidekick Whoo Kid invited Transylvanian duo Monica and Gabriela Irimia, known as the Cheeky Girls, back to their London hotel — but the sisters politely declined. STEVE KANDELL



The Cheeky Girls: "No!"



Ms. Dynamite: "Forget it!"

WEIRD BAND ALERT!

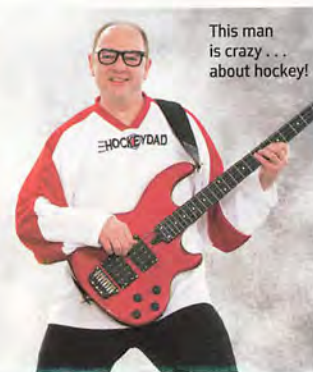
HOCKEYDAD

A Minnesota hockey fan rocks heartland rinks

"HockeyDad": Is that like "soccer mom"? Sort of. Tom Dery is a 40-year-old stay-at-home father of two from Minnesota who wears hockey jerseys and plays songs about the sport.

House-husband by day, rocker by night?

Very much so. Dery, who is also a practicing stay-at-home lawyer, performs "100 percent heartland, cold-weather rock & roll" at local rinks and fairs. "Initially, my songs were only appreciated by my kids in the minivan," he says.

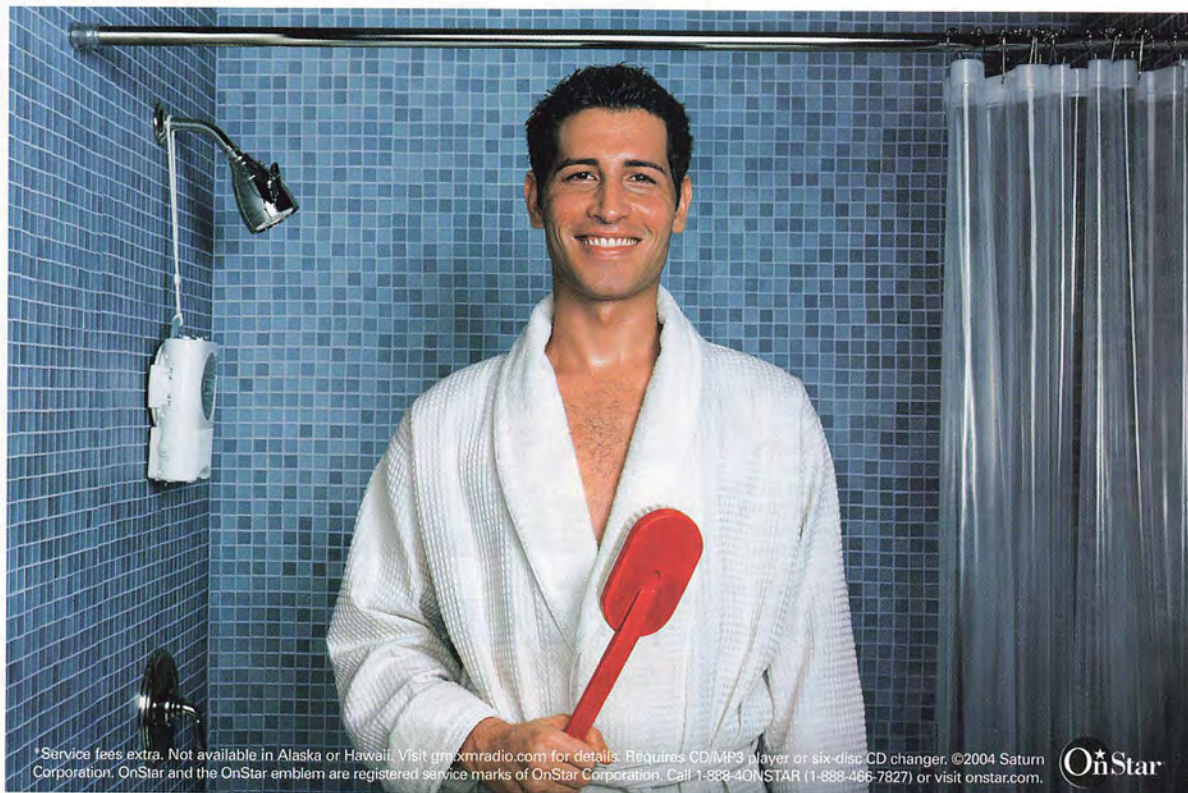


This man is crazy... about hockey!

Does HockeyDad write his own music?

In a sense. He writes lyrics (about hockey) and sets them to classic-rock tunes. "I'm using Cher's 'Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves' next," Dery says. LAUREN HARRIS

The Man Who Could Not Sing



The Six-Speaker Saturn ION Quad Coupe



People first.





BULL'S-EYE!

A flying bird unloads into a singing **Cyndi Lauper's** open mouth



1 May 2004: '80s star Cyndi Lauper is singing at an outdoor concert in Mansfield, Massachusetts, for local radio station KISS-108.



2 Among the thousands of spectators is a lone bird flying directly overhead.



3 "I was minding my own business, singing the long note in the third verse of 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun,'" Lauper later recalls. "All of a sudden, I... felt something."



4 "It was God's little joke," Lauper says after her show. "My grandmother says it's good luck. I think it's disgusting." **STEVE KANDELL**

NEWS ROUNDUP!

For her Re-Invention Tour, **MADONNA** has imposed a cursing fine of \$5 a word on her crew. The star herself was forced to pay up after reportedly shouting at her dancers: "Get it right or get the fuck out!"

GODSMACK's road crew allegedly beat up a support band at an Indiana radio festival. **STORY OF THE YEAR** claim they were jumped, held down and pummeled by four "Cro-Magnon jocks" after leaving the stage. The crew were apparently angry at what they deemed **Story of the Year's** attempts to upstage **Godsmack**.

MOBY is the musical director for a forthcoming movie about doomed Joy Division singer **IAN CURTIS**.

WORD!



"Justin Timberlake has changed. He's gotten cocky. Some people can handle success and some can't."

JANET JACKSON



Used singer Bert McCracken sings an ode to the love of his life — his dog.

IN THE STUDIO

"F#&king Devastated!"

The Used's Bert McCracken dedicates a love song to a dead Chihuahua

★ "I HAD A Chihuahua named David Bowie, and he just got hit by a car," says the Used's frontman, Bert McCracken. "I've never lost anything in my life, and I was fucking devastated — so I dedicated one of our new songs to him."

So the lovelorn song isn't about ex-girlfriend Kelly Osbourne, then?

"It's a real sad-as-fuck love song about a stupid little dog."

For the past few months, McCracken, 22, and his Utah screamo-metal foursome have been recording *The Spider and the Fly*, *Number Two*, the follow-up to their gold-certified 2002 debut, in a Los Angeles studio. It has been a pleasant experience, save McCracken's in-studio behavior.

"I like to finger my ass before I sing. I'm a little bitch in the studio,"

he announces, quickly squeezing out "just kidding!" between cackles.

The temper-tantrum track "Take My Hand" is the new album's first single. "It's about being negative, going to sleep when the sun comes up and burning everything."

McCracken explains. Yet he swears the new album is brighter than anything the band has ever produced: "It's upbeat; it's got a really good vibe. I envision people dancing their asses off!"

That high-energy vibe might have something to do

with the studio's built-in java rig. "There's always cups of coffee with four shots of espresso each," McCracken notes. "Our producer, John Feldmann, is serious about coffee. Starbucks workers are here making coffee 24 hours a day." **JONAH WEINER**

ALL ABOUT OUR ALBUM!

BAND
The Used

STUDIO
Foxy Studios, Los Angeles

PRODUCER
John Feldmann

LAST RECORD
The Used (Reprise, 2002)

NEW RECORD
The Spider and the Fly, Number Two (due in October)

ALSO IN THE STUDIO

☞ Singer **NIKKI COSTA** is in L.A. working on *Can't Never Did Nothing*, her first record since 2001's *Everybody Got Their Something...*

Scottish rockers **IDLEWILD** are at Sunset Sound in L.A. recording with Tony Hoffer. Their last LP was 2002's gold *The Remote Part...*

Brooklyn-born **FABOLOUS** is in New York creating tracks for his third record, *Real Talk*, the follow-up to 2003's platinum *Sweet Dreams...*

Alt-rockers **AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD** are in Brooklyn recording their follow-up to 2002's *Source Tags & Codes...*



FROM FLIMSY TO FROZEN!



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GARNIER

USEFUL TIPS FROM THE STARS!

HOW TO...

Tie a Windsor Knot!

Twist a tie into a fancy Windsor with dapper "State Property" rapper **Beanie Sigel**

1 DRESS TO IMPRESS!

"When I was on trial [for attempted murder; after a hung jury, his new trial will start in 2005], people noticed I was dressed up for court. A Windsor knot, the 'fat knot,' is the best kind, especially for a French-cut collar, which is wider than regular shirts. A wider knot fills up space; you look classier."

BY STEVE KANDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL LAVINE

2 GIVE IT A ONCE-OVER!

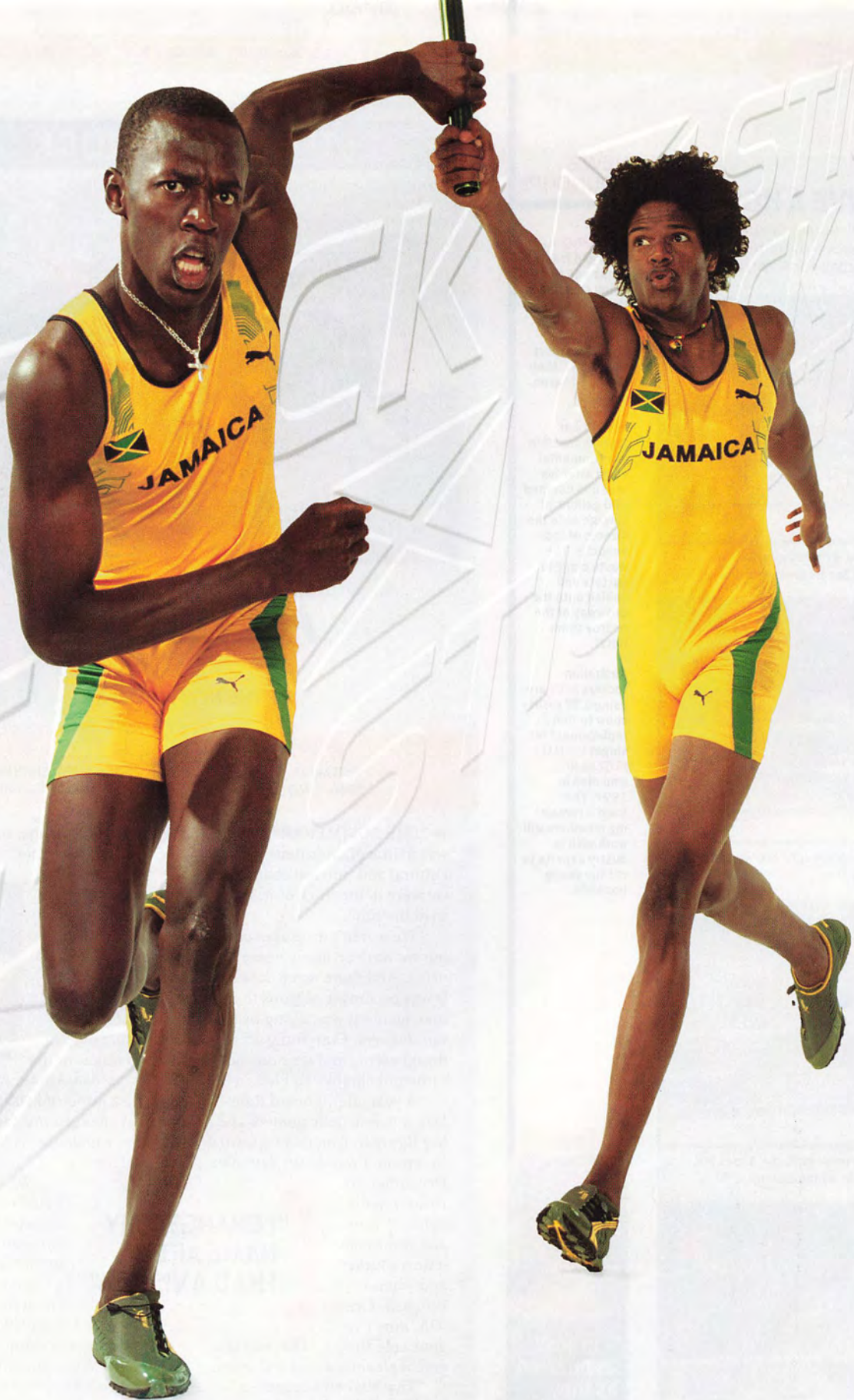
"You want to keep the wide end of the tie long, because you'll be doing a lot of twisting — and you don't want the tie too short. The first loop is just like you're tying a normal tie knot. But for a Windsor, you're basically doing that same knot twice. The top of the triangle will end up wider than usual."

3 DO A DOUBLE-TAKE!

"Pull the longer, wider end through the loop, then behind the narrow end again and to the left. Pull that end through the loop again so the wide part's inside-out. Bring that end through the knot and hold the end as you tighten it — the top of the knot needs to be wider so it's almost like a triangle."

4 SUIT UP!

"If you're gonna do the Windsor, you gotta do it right — it says a lot about your character. Everybody should own at least one suit and tie, even if you never wear them — a black suit works for pretty much everything. Wear polka dots with stripes, that's the thing. And you gotta rock the cufflinks."



STICK STICK STICK 
Proud Sponsor of the Jamaican Relay Team





GIVE A HOOT!

Tsk! **Britney Spears** heaves a cigarette off her balcony. For shame!



1 Relaxing on her balcony in June, Britney Spears decides to smoke.



2 The newly engaged pop wunderkind takes a drag.



I'm so over this ciggie!

3 After a single puff, she tosses the cigarette off the balcony.



4 Gravity pulls the possibly still-lit cigarette toward the ground.

NEWS ROUNDUP!

KELLY OSBOURNE has emerged from rehab and is being coached in the ways of sobriety by her brother, Jack. "He's an expert right now," their mother, Sharon, claimed.

TWISTA has found himself in environmental court after his tour bus dumped 200 gallons of sewage onto the streets of Indianapolis. The waste clogged gutters and spilled onto the driveway of the nearby Omni Hotel.

Australian rockers **INXS** are using a TV reality show to find a replacement for singer **MICHAEL HUTCHENCE**, who died in 1997. The band's remaining members will work with industry experts to vet the young hopefuls.

WORD!



"I'm just as puzzled as they are."

JENNIFER LOPEZ, ON HOW BOTH SHE AND HER FANS ARE CONFUSED BY HER "DIVA MYTH"

LIFE AFTER ROCK

The New Animals:
Male-on-male
arm-locking!



Antion

FORMERLY VIC BRIGGS

OF THE NEW ANIMALS



Antion and his massive bongo thing

THEN!
GUITARIST,
1966-1968

NOW!
SOUND HEALER/PLUMBER,
KAUAI, HAWAII

★ "THE SUMMER OF LOVE was a time of enormous social, cultural and musical change, and we were in the thick of it. I was 21 at the time.

"We weren't drug abusers, but we were certainly heavy drug users. And there was a dark side: It was becoming obvious that management was taking us to the cleaners. Everything was disappearing and tensions became unbearable, so I left in '68.

"A year later, I heard Ram Das, a psychedelic pioneer and a key figure in American spirituality, speak. I was so fired up. On December 26, 1969, I had a bottle of wine and some cold leftover turkey, and when I finished, I said, 'OK, now I've gone cold turkey.' That was the end of alcohol, drugs and meat.

"That's when I became a student of Kundalini, which is an incredibly powerful kind of yoga. It was the nearest thing I had experienced to drugs

without doing drugs, so I became an instructor.

"With a family to support, I had a shadow life as a restaurant plumbing contractor — I was a vegetarian plumbing Burger Kings! I had also been studying the sacred music of the Sikhs, *gurbani kirtan*. After having a profound vision in 1992, I changed my name to Antion, which means 'Royal Star of the Lion.'



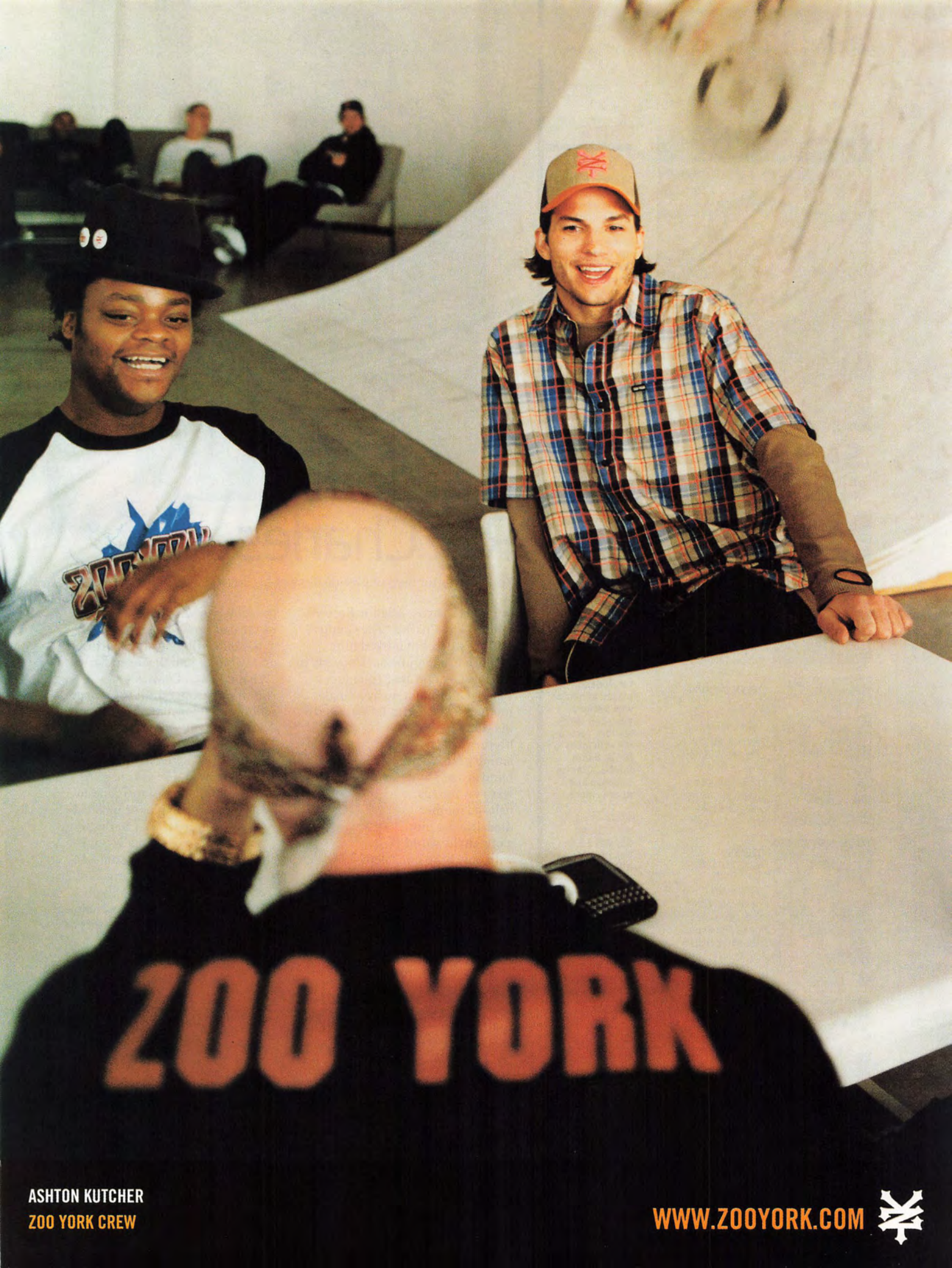
Antion, in full Sikh regalia

"We moved to Kauai in 1993. I'm a sound healer, a voice-empowerment teacher and a Hawaiian chanter. I help people to find

their natural voice and to overcome blockages in their psyche.

"When I was playing rock & roll, I never felt spiritually satisfied. There was a lot of musical satisfaction. Now there is a lot of spiritual satisfaction." *JOHN REGARDIE*

"I CHANGED MY NAME AFTER I HAD A VISION."



ASHTON KUTCHER
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WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG?

Digweed
who?

SASHA

At Carbon Records, 36-38
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NATIONAL HABIT

"The perfect summer album for driving with the stereo on full volume. It's inspired by bands I grew up listening to: the Police, Talk Talk."

PEVEN EVERETT
STUDIO
CONFESSIONS

"A modern music journey difficult to classify. It jumps among soul, house, hip-hop, funk, Latino. His voice feels like Marvin Gaye's."

DELAYS
FADED SEASIDE
GLAMOUR

"This really has a Fleetwood Mac feel — I've admired Fleetwood Mac since I was a kid. Delays' singer has an amazing falsetto."

ULRICH SCHNAUSS
A STRANGELY
ISOLATED PLACE

"Beautiful electronic music with Cocteau Twins and Slowdive influences by an amazing German producer."

KERRY POTTER

→ SASHA'S NEW ALBUM, *INVOLVER*
(GLOBAL UNDERGROUND), IS OUT NOW.

OBITS

ROBERT QUINE
61, June 5, in New York, of a heroin overdose. Lead guitarist for '70s punks Richard Hell and the Voidoids. Quine — who also played in Lou Reed's band and did session work for Tom Waits — was found dead in his apartment.

BEN SHABALALA
Age unknown, June 16, in Durban, South Africa. Former member of the South African a cappella vocal group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Shabalala, who sang on Paul Simon's *Graceland*, was shot and killed in unknown circumstances.

ELVIN JONES
76, May 18, in Englewood, New Jersey, of heart failure. Drummer in the John Coltrane Quartet. Jones played behind a who's-who of post-bop band-leaders, recording with Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman and dozens more.

JOHN WHITEHEAD
55, May 11, in Philadelphia. R&B singer-songwriter who teamed with Gene McFadden for the 1979 disco hit "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now." Whitehead was shot and killed on the street while working on his vehicle.

Ray Charles
in 1965......and
in 2003

Ray Charles 1930-2004

Soul's inventor died of liver disease at his Los Angeles home at age 73

★ IN THE 1950s, Atlantic Records dubbed Ray Charles "The Genius." The tag stuck, but it irked him.

Born to shotgun-shack poverty in Albany, Georgia, on September 23, 1930, and brought up by a single mother, Ray Charles Robinson saw his younger brother drown in a laundry tub, went blind at age 7 and was 15 when his beloved mother died, leaving him alone in the world with only his piano talent.

With unbending independence, Charles moved to Seattle, where he made his first record in 1948. It wasn't until 1954 that he reckoned "I became myself" with "I Got a Woman." Slamming together

gospel fervor and R&B sensuality, he created soul music.

Despite gritty hits like "Georgia on My Mind" and the incendiary "What'd I Say," Charles was a chitlin-circuit star until 1962's soul-hillbilly meltdown *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music* climbed to number 1.

Tough enough to cold-turkey a 17-year heroin addiction in 1965 and to refuse to play segregated South Africa, Charles did 200 gigs annually until slowed by a hip replacement last year. For 40 years he inspired artists from Elvis Presley to Norah Jones. Throughout, he stuck to his credo: "I was only interested in two things: being true to myself and being true to the music." PHIL SUTCLIFFE

THE "GENIUS"
TAG ALWAYS
IRKED HIM.

RAY CHARLES HIS GREATEST CDs

THE GENIUS
SINGS THE BLUES

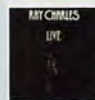
★★★★★

ATLANTIC, 1961
Lustrous R&B full of sex and despair showcasing Charles's own songwriting.

MODERN SOUNDS
IN COUNTRY AND
WESTERN MUSIC

★★★★★

ABC-PARAMOUNT, 1962
Sweet choirs meet the crushing black voice of pain.



RAY CHARLES LIVE

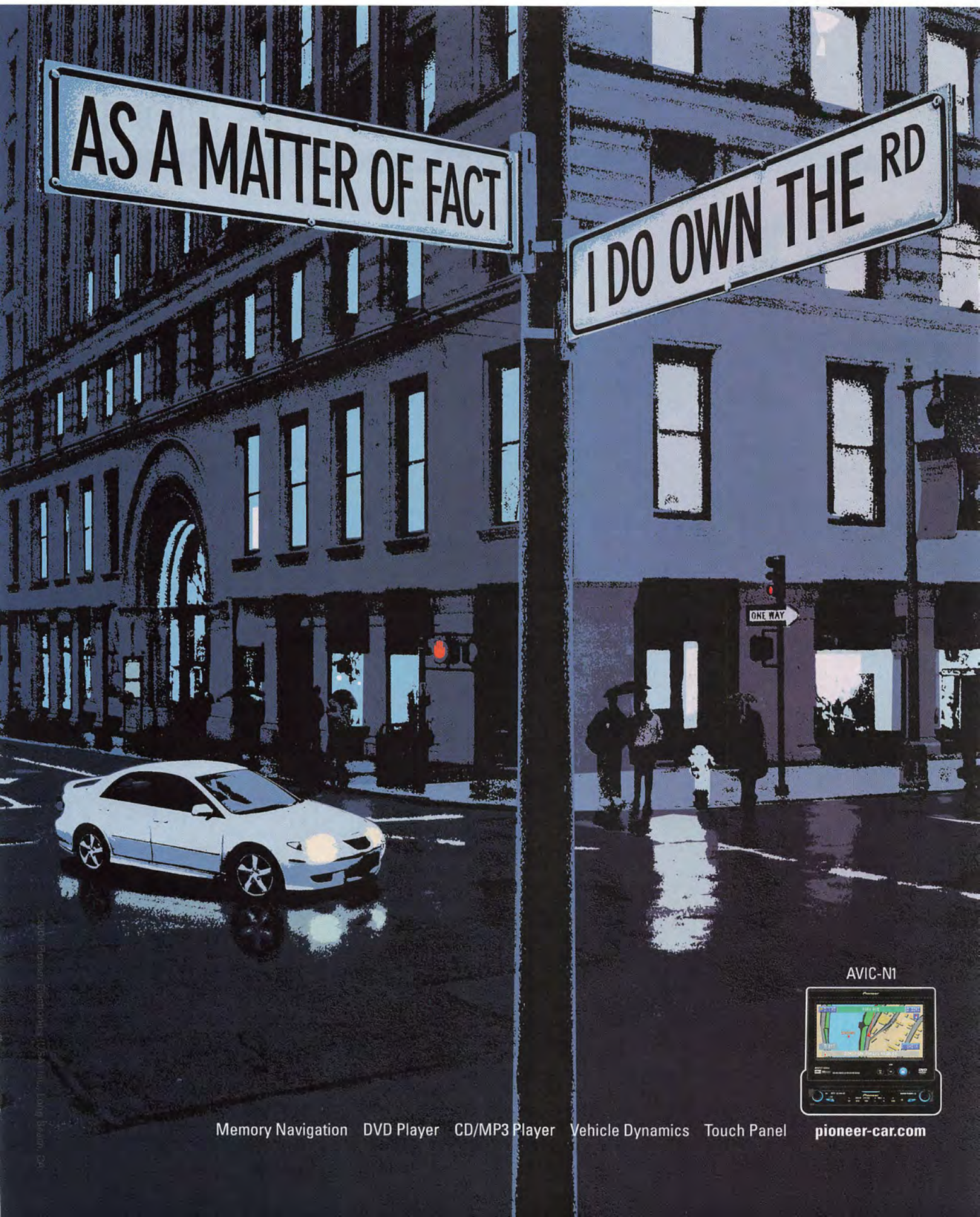
★★★★★

ATLANTIC, 1973
Two late-'50s LPs combined. Septet smoking. Ray plays sax! *Berlin 1962* is also recommended.

THE DEFINITIVE
RAY CHARLES

★★★★★

ATLANTIC, 2001
From tail-shaking "Mess Around" to ravishing Beatles interpretations.



AVIC-N1



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Songs You Must Download This Month

AS SELECTED BY BLENDER

The Scissor Sisters celebrate Hertz's computer mix-up.



OK, Ciara, you can wash our car.



ICON KEY



SADOES



HIPSTERS



CRUNKY



RAWK



AGING HIPSTERS



SUPERSTAR POP

- 1 **Dashboard Confessional "Vindicated"** COLUMBIA/SONY MUSIC SOUNDTRAX   
Bookish and girl-shy, Spider-Man is a pretty emo superhero. . .
- 2 **Capleton "In Her Heart"** VPI/ATLANTIC 
Dancehall's answer to Busta Rhymes loses his mind over woozy synths and staccato drums.
- 3 **The Libertines "Can't Stand Me Now"** ROUGH TRADE  
Battling acrimony and crack addiction, the U.K.'s finest return with this freewheeling punk breakup song.
- 4 **Pixies "Bam Thwok"** ITUNES EXCLUSIVE 
Gleeful nonsense about intergalactic goodwill on their first new song in over a decade.
- 3 **Rilo Kiley "It's a Hit"** BRUTE/BEAUTE  
Lovely-voiced Jenny Lewis elegantly trashes stupid white men over sunny indie-pop.
- 6 **Comp "Harder"** DEF JAM 
Boastful 18-year-old Baltimore rookie breezes his way across percolating soul that evokes vintage Jay-Z.
- 7 **Scissor Sisters "Take Me Out"** NO LABEL 
NYC glam troupe turns Franz Ferdinand hit into a swinging piano affair: Think Elton John gone post-punk.
- 8 **LL Cool J "Headsprung"** DEF JAM   
He may represent Queens, but on this Timbaland-produced banger, LL gets his Dirty South on.
- 9 **Bone Crusher feat. Ying-Yang Twins "Take Ya Clothes Off"** SO SO DEF/ARISTA 
Don King-haired behemoth burps and bellows his way through the spookiest song ever about strippers.
- 10 **Longwave "We're Not Gonna Crack"** RCA  
Almost stoner-rock, except the barreling tempo is better suited for moshing than munchies.
- 11 **Sons and Daughters "Johnny Cash"** DOMINO 
Franz Ferdinand's tourmates combine country-rock with Scottish folk for one burning boogie.
- 12 **Houston feat. Chingy, Nate Dogg and I-20 "I Like That"** CAPITOL   
L.A. loverman goes straight for the booty while a fuzzy, synthed-out club beat goes straight for the groin.
- 13 **PJ Harvey "Who the Fuck"** ISLAND  
Ms. Misery whips out her most tortured yelp for this garage-punk piss-off to an overbearing dude.
- 14 **Nas "Thief's Theme"** SONY URBAN/COLUMBIA  
Saluting stick-up kids and sampling "In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida," Nas returns to his lyric-heavy roots.
- 15 **Ciara feat. Petey Pablo "Goodies"** LIFEC/SONY   
R&B coquette purrs like Beyoncé on sedatives, and Lil Jon's beat makes crunk sound sultry.
- 16 **Ashlee Simpson "Unreachable"** GEFEN 
Jessica's lil' sis slams a horny boy. Giving it up on the first date is soooo lame!
- 17 **Todd Snider "Conservative Christian, Right Wing, Republican..."** OH BOY 
Veteran country-folk gadfly gives cheeky props to trees and porn, disses gay-bashers and shirt-tuckers.
- 18 **Black Dice "Treetops"** DFA 
Brooklyn noiseniks wrap gentle guitars inside pulsating whirrs, rumbles and dolphin calls.
- 19 **Inoué "Elected"** SAY HEY 
Philadelphia sad boys wring sorrow from moaning slide guitars and lyrics about missing out on life.
- 20 **Beastie Boys "Time to Build"** CAPITOL   
The finest hip-hop song ever to give a shout-out to the Kyoto Protocol.

Note: Not all of these songs are legally available for download — yet. In those instances, Blender encourages you to buy the original CD. From top: NME/IPC Media, Joseph Culicce, Mark Mann

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DEAR SUPERSTAR

YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS. WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

Avril Lavigne

The multiplatinum punkette may not speak French — *merde!* — but she does like to flip off paparazzi, drunkenly run around naked and kick guys in the nuts. *Oooooof!*

BY DAVID KEEPS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHERYL NIELDS



Avril Lavigne's hobbies include reading and ostrich-plucking.

CANADIAN ASS-KICKER Avril Lavigne is running late for an appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. In Los Angeles to promote her second album, *Under My Skin*, the tiny-but-tough 19-year-old hustles her entourage toward a waiting van, leading the way in a black skirt with bondage straps and a pair of unbuckled combat boots.

As we pull out of the hotel driveway, Lavigne wonders aloud if it would be “wrong” to flip off the paparazzi, who have been waiting for her. “Go for it,” her manager says. Down goes the window and up goes the volume. “Mother-fuck-ers!” she screams with delight.

Suitably unburdened, she pops a piece of cinnamon Extra into her potty mouth and offers *Blender* a stick. “I only eat cinnamon, because mint gives me a headache. And if someone around me is chewing mint gum, that gives me a headache, too.”

Nothing like the headache that facing your questions will bring on. . . .

Parlez-vous Français, Avril?

SLAMMINPAM, LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

Uh, no, *je ne parle Français*. My father was born in France, so I will one day, probably. I want to learn Japanese. That'd be helpful.

On *Under My Skin*, you sing, “I am small but the world is big/I'm not afraid of anything.” Come on — you must be afraid of *something*.

HIERO9999, AUBURN, NEBRASKA

I'm afraid of the dark. Sometimes, yeah, I get spooked. Especially sleeping in haunted hotels. I've felt ghosts before. You feel a presence — a warmth and a heaviness. I was staying at the Timberline Lodge, where *The Shining* was filmed, and I didn't know anything about the movie. I hadn't seen it — of course, now I have — and I walked into my room, and it felt haunted. The janitor took us around at midnight, into the attic. I totally felt it — one whole side of my arm and my face was goosebumps.

How old is the oldest guy you'd date?
(I'm 33, by the way.)

C_DEWALT, ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO

Twenty-five or 26 would be the oldest, not older. I'm kind of into guys who are three

to five years older than me; they're a little more mature. I'm 19; I've traveled the world, like, five times; I've been in weird situations and I go out in front of thousands of people and do my thing. All that causes you to grow up really fast. I would never date a guy my age or younger.

Is it true you were once a choirgirl?

MAMACAPA, ATHENS, GEORGIA

My mom went to church — obviously I had to go because she made me — and she bugged and bugged the choir director to let me sing. I was in a Christian school and kind of sheltered, but when I went into public school I started listening to Blink-182 and bands like that.

What word or phrase do you overuse the most?

KATARATII, MONUMENT, COLORADO

Nasty!

Do short people have more to prove?

OZOZZY_6, KIMBERLY, OREGON

I'm sure they do, because small beings are more insecure. But I like small guys, 'cause I'm short. I don't want a big, tall, huge guy. I want a guy where my arms rest more comfortably around him. Trust me, I've had to do the tiptoe thing.

What do people say to you on the street?

FATFREDDIE4, LOS ANGELES

They're usually nice. Although there was this one time in a record store when this guy was talking shit. I ignored him and left the store. He came outside and started again, so I grabbed him and was like, “What'd ya say?” Then he mouthed off at me again, so I kned him really hard in the balls. Then I threw him — he went flying. His little punk girlfriend comes up, like, “What the fuck are you doing?” I'm like, “What the fuck are *you* doing?” They both ran off. That's not how I usually deal with that stuff, but that day I was wearing my army pants and boots and tank top, and I was just like, “Don't talk to me like that.”

What was your very first show like?

SPAZXSPAZ, GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Oh, my God! I was at the Commodore in →

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THE WIRELESS WORLD





"I'M NOT HILARY DUFF, YOU
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"



Zorro's real identity did come as a surprise.

★ AVRIL LAVIGNE



↑ Cobain: "See, I can play 'Teen Spirit' standing on my head!"

Vancouver, where Nirvana had played. There's a famous picture of Kurt Cobain playing there. The show was being taped for some radio thing, and I swore every other word, and then I threw my thousand-dollar mic on the ground and broke it. And I stage-dived. At the end of the show I was sat down and told that if someone gets hurt during the show, I can get sued. I had no idea! I was like, "Fuck this, fuck that!" Kicking and screaming and chucking shit like a little devil.

Whose album are you most itching to hear: Hilary Duff, Lindsay Lohan or Paris Hilton?

FARSPARKLEZ, RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

What? They're all making records? I'd rather hear Alanis Morissette.

When was the last time you stole something?

SKITTLEBUG1001, MELBOURNE, FLORIDA

I usually just take things from hotels. I mean, I've taken a pillow. They put it on your bill — it's, like, a hundred bucks.

Are you crazy rich now?

PRESTOLEUM1, POCATELLO, IDAHO

I don't think of it that way; I don't really think about money. I have an apartment, and I already want to move, because it's not big enough. I need a house, 'cause I want to set my drums up and have a basement with a studio. And I need a walk-in closet. I have 20 million pairs of Converse and Doc Martens boots.



What have you done with all of your ties, and can I have one of them?

DFKLOUD, GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

I wore one every day for a year, maybe longer, and then I gave all the ties away that I didn't want and kept the ones I did want. I have a treasure trunk at home, and I keep them there. I still have my tie that I wore for the videos, still knotted with the same knot, and I still have my Grammy tie. I'm very sentimental.

What exactly is there to do in Napanee, Ontario?

ELLPARKS_STU, NEW YORK

Fuck-all. It's just a little town where everybody knows everybody and



"I WOULD NEVER DATE A GUY WHO WAS MY AGE OR YOUNGER."

everybody's business, and there's nothing to do except get drunk.

A couple of months ago, Blender named Starship's "We Built This City" the worst song ever. What would you have picked?

KILLERSPIRAL88, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

I don't want to be mean, but the Clay Aiken song — "Invisible." It sounds like a weird old church song or something.

Who is "Don't Tell Me" about?

VICIOUSCHIC, DALLAS

It isn't about anyone in particular. I wrote that when I was 17, and I was inspired by seeing what my friends went through in high school and how guys always have an ulterior motive. It's a trip being able to be strong and to say no and have a little respect for yourself. I knew a lot of girls could relate to it, and I thought it would be a good anthem for them.

You're 19. Are you legal in Canada?

NOGOROTTEN, DYERSBERG, TENNESSEE

Yes, I am. It's weird when I go out to a nice restaurant, say on a date, and I order a glass of wine and they're like, "Can we see your ID?" Fuck! In the States, some people let me get away with it and some people are like, "We need to see your ID so we don't get fired." Then I just whip out my fake ID. I've had people at clubs go, "That's not you!" And then let me in anyway.

What was your nickname when you were in school?

KWONZON, TOPEKA, KANSAS

I didn't have a nickname. Oh, yeah, I did — Abbey. Abbey Dawn. I think it's a place. That's what my dad called me, so all my friends did, too.

What do you think of all the other teen stars who rag on you?

THRILLED2CRY, MENTOR, OHIO

Think I care? No. I couldn't care less. →



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 **NOKIA**

I'm not Hilary Duff, you know what I mean? That's what made me stand out in the beginning: I was, like, this girl who was saying stuff and wasn't putting on a front.

Tell us your favorite joke.

MISTRESSMOON, COLUMBUS, OHIO

OK. This 3-year-old kid is home alone, and a salesman comes to the door. The kid answers, and he's got a porno in one hand, a cigar in one hand and a bottle of J.D. The salesman goes, "Hi, little boy, are your parents home?" The kid goes, "What the fuck do you think?"

What's the weirdest gift you've ever received from a fan?

CONVOY ONE, CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

I was in an airport in South Korea, and we were mobbed by hundreds of kids bearing all these gifts. I got to the car and opened the box that was sitting on my lap, and there was a wedding dress in it. And wedding shoes. There was also a bag between my legs. I opened that, and it was a bunny rabbit. I was so freaked out! I thought it was a dead cat, and I screamed and I threw it. I thought it was someone into witchcraft trying to do some weird thing.

If you were going to live today like it was your last day, what would your schedule be?

F. HARRISON, SCOTTSBORO, ALABAMA

My last day would be spent with the guy I like, and I'd see my family and we'd all have

one big huge party and drink lots of Jäger. That's my favorite drink. It's the shot that doesn't make you gag or go *ugh*. It tastes like black licorice!

Who's crazier: Michael Jackson or Courtney Love?

ENVEEYSLULU, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

I don't know — they're both pretty crazy. They're different crazy — she's, like, rock & roll crazy, and he's, like, weird crazy.

What do you always have backstage?

PARASOLSOUL, NEW ORLEANS

Tea, a hairbrush, lip gloss. Not lip gloss, but Chapstick. I don't wear lip gloss onstage cause my hair sticks to it. It's really annoying.

What are you most likely to get busted for?

FERRIS F, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

I've been known to run around naked when I'm trashed. So maybe indecent exposure. Actually, I'd probably be arrested for disturbing the peace. One time I



"I'VE BEEN KNOWN TO RUN AROUND NAKED WHEN I'M TRASHED."



was drinking whiskey, and I was so loud someone called the fire department.

If you were going to represent Canada in the 2004 Olympics, what sport would you choose?

ABATOILE310, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

I would play hockey. I was a right winger and center growing up.

When you get mad, are you a sulker or a shouter?

FREEKOUT14, MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND

I'm a shouter. If it's a guy making me mad, I'll scream in his face.

What does it take to get you out of bed in the morning?

CUSPOFBLACK, JASPER, ARKANSAS

A few phone calls from my manager. And food. If egg whites, bacon and a few berries are there, I can get up.

What would Avril the fragrance smell like?

66NEVERMORE, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

Jägermeister, tequila and

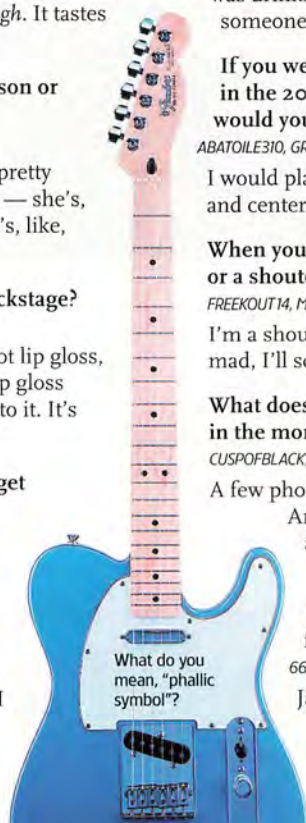


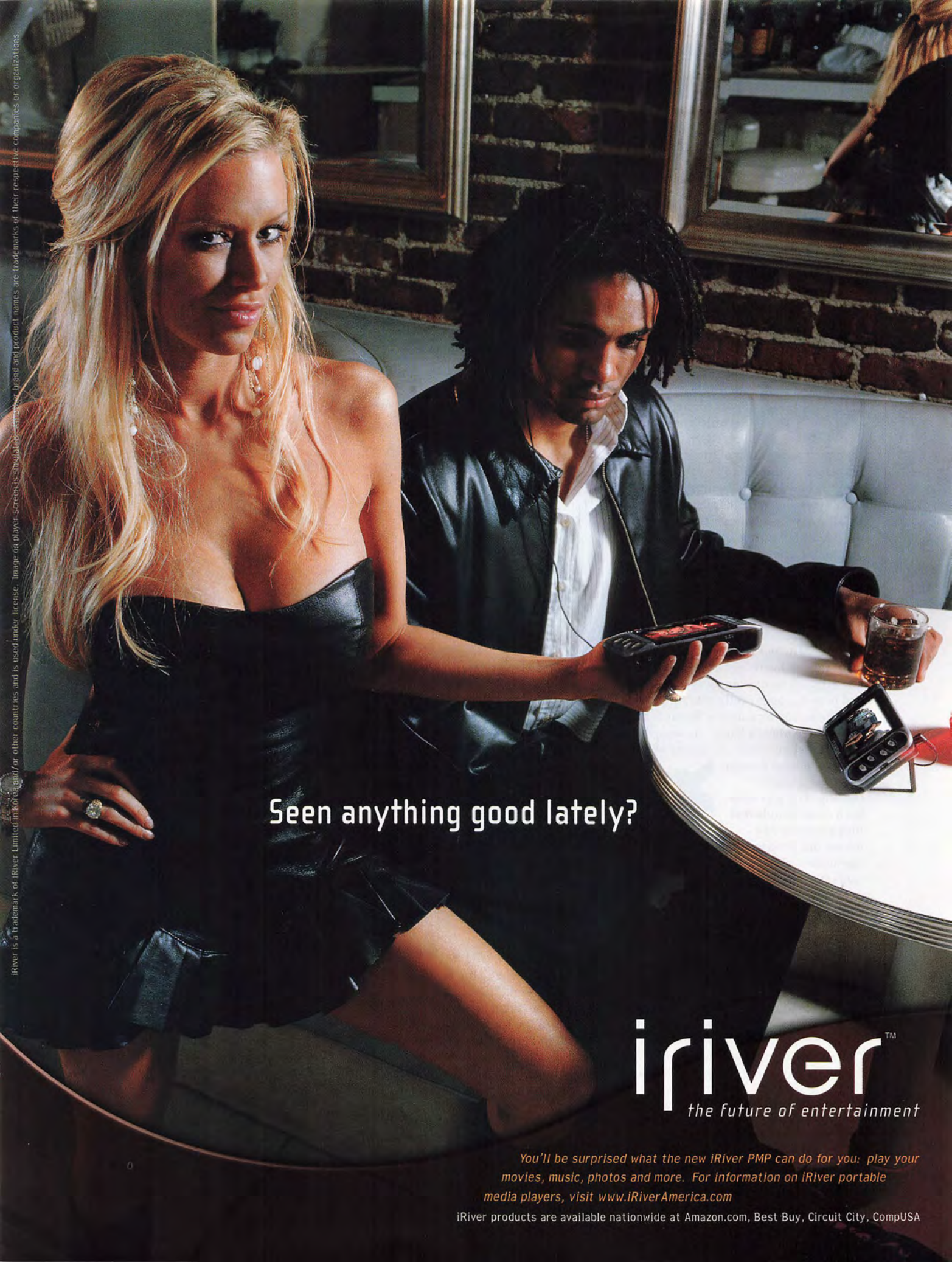
cinnamon. And rock pits. When my armpits are sweaty, I call them rock pits, 'cause I rock and roll.

What would you like to have named after you?

METROPOWER, ASHLAND, WISCONSIN

A guitar. I just started playing Fenders, like Telecasters. So maybe a guitar called Avril, instead of Gibson or Fender. Or it could just be called Rock Pit. [BLENDER]





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Free Man in Paris

→ In 1974, **Joni Mitchell** penned a bitter tune for her record-label president. He was none too pleased, especially after it became her biggest hit



WHEN JONI Mitchell played the finished tapes of her 1974 album *Court and Spark* for her Asylum Records labelmate Bob Dylan, the

venerated spokesman of his generation fell asleep. "I think Bobby was just being cute," is how Mitchell figures it.

It's certainly hard to imagine that Dylan was bored, because the album included what turned out to be Mitchell's biggest hit singles: "Help Me" and "Free Man in Paris." Had Dylan paid a bit more attention, he might have realized that the subject of the latter tune was standing in the room beside him.

"I wrote that in Paris for David Geffen," Mitchell has explained, "taking a lot of it from the things he said." Geffen and Mitchell went a long way back. He had been her agent at the start of her rise to fame in the '60s, and by the time she wrote "Free Man in Paris," he owned the record label for which she (along with the Eagles, Jackson Browne and Dylan) was recording. The pair were such close friends that they even shared a house, but despite wide speculation about a romantic entanglement, theirs was more akin to a *Will & Grace* relationship.

Ned Doheny, another guitarist-songwriter who was managed by Geffen at that time, has characterized the dynamic young executive as an unhappy man despite his wealth and power. "There was always something kind of desperate and sad about David," he told author Fred Goodman, noting that Geffen paid an unusual amount of attention to the progress of his clients' romantic affairs.

"People assume everything I write is autobiographical," Mitchell complains. "If I sing in the first person, they assume it's all about me. With a song like 'Free Man in Paris,' they attribute almost every word of the song to my personal life,



Joni's hat was later crushed and snorted by David Crosby.

"DAVID GEFFEN BEGGED ME TO TAKE IT OFF THE ALBUM."

somehow missing the setups of 'He said' and 'She said.' "

Geffen, then, is the one who, in the words of the song, "felt unfettered and alive" in Paris because "there was nobody calling me up for favors." The song articulates his desire to rid himself of the "dreamers and telephone screamers" and other hassles of being a music-industry mover and shaker and return to the freedom he had felt while strolling down the Champs Élysées.

Although Mitchell's early career was founded in folk-rock, by 1973 she was

having trouble finding rock musicians who were sensitive to the way she structured her songs and phrased her melodies. "I had no choice but to go with jazz musicians," she says. "I tried to play with all of the rock bands that were the usual sections for James Taylor when we made our transition from folk to folk-rock. They couldn't play my music, because it's so eccentric. They would try, but the straight-ahead 2/4 rock & roll running through would steamroller right over it."

Mitchell had started moving toward jazz on her 1972 album *For the Roses* by → 5

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **CHOOSE** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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"No, seriously. Give me back my shoes."

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG
"Free Man in Paris"

ARTIST
Joni Mitchell

LABEL
Asylum

PRODUCERS
Joni Mitchell and Henry Lewy

PERFORMERS
Joni Mitchell
acoustic guitar, vocals
Tom Scott
wind instruments
John Guerin
drums
Jim Hughart
bass
Larry Carlton
guitar
Chuck Findley
trumpet
Jose Feliciano
guitar
David Crosby and Graham Nash
backing vocals

RELEASED
August 1974

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
22

WEEKS ON CHART
24

bringing in woodwind player Tom Scott. She then hired his entire band, the L.A. Express, for the recording of *Court and Spark* in 1973 at A&M's suite of studios in Los Angeles. "When Joni gets musicians in the studio," noted her engineer and coproducer, Henry Lewy, "the first three or four takes are usually just for listening. She doesn't really want to think too much about them — she just wants to play, and frequently you get some real magic happening in those takes."

The breezy "Free Man in Paris" opens with guitar, percussion and Tom Scott's flute. "I refer to our experience together as a real ping-pong match," he says, "where I'm out in the studio and she's in the booth, and I play this, and she'll say, 'That's great; why don't we try this?' It's back and forth. We were co-creators of that aspect of her records."

The track was already evolving nicely when fate lent a hand. "I was working with John Lennon in a studio along the corridor," recalls guitarist José Feliciano. "We were doing his back-to-roots album *Rock 'n' Roll*, but things weren't going too well. John had got very drunk, so I got bored and walked out into the corridor."

Hearing "Free Man in Paris" wafting

out of Mitchell's studio, Feliciano recognized it as something that fit nicely with his own style. "I already knew Joni from when we both worked in Canada," he explains, "so I walked in and said I thought I could play some good electric guitar for it. The great guitarist Larry Carlton of the L.A. Express was already on the track, but I knew I could hold my own with him. Joni didn't try to direct me at all, just let me do what I do, and it turned out really good."

His contribution in the can, Feliciano then favored Mitchell with some advice. "She was playing with her guitar in an open tuning," he recalls, "so I pointed out that although open tunings are nice, they

can be restrictive. I said that she'd be better off just to tune her guitar in the normal way. She didn't like that. I think it put her off me a little."

Although Mitchell was pleased with the song, which features David Crosby and Graham Nash on backing vocals, Geffen was not so sure. "He didn't like it at the time," she says. "He begged me to take it off the record. I think he felt uncomfortable being shown in that light."

Court and Spark was released in January 1974 to glowing reviews, but its eventual multi-platinum success has been a two-edged sword for Mitchell. "*Court and Spark* was about as popular as it got," she says. "Everything after that was compared unfavorably to it." It's responsible for influencing subsequent generations of musicians, including Madonna, who once noted, "In high school, I worshiped Joni Mitchell and sang everything from *Court and Spark*, my coming-of-age record."

The album's first single, "Help Me," hit number 7 on the *Billboard* charts, and when the time came for a follow-up, Mitchell's thoughts turned to the forlorn love song "Car on a Hill."

"I wanted to release it as a single, and [Asylum Records] fought me on it. Instead, 'Free Man in Paris' was released, which never sounded like a single to me."

The public, however, thought otherwise, pushing it to number 22 in the U.S. and giving Mitchell her biggest international hit to date. The song has also become one of her most-covered compositions, with Elton John, Neil Diamond and Shawn Colvin among the many who have taken it to heart.

As for Geffen, he never did manage to quit the music industry. He's now a billionaire and part owner — the G — of the vast multinational entertainment conglomerate DreamWorks SKG. **JOHNNY BLACK**



JONI MITCHELL
Folk-rocking mother of every confessional female singer-songwriter of the past four decades.



WHO'S WHO



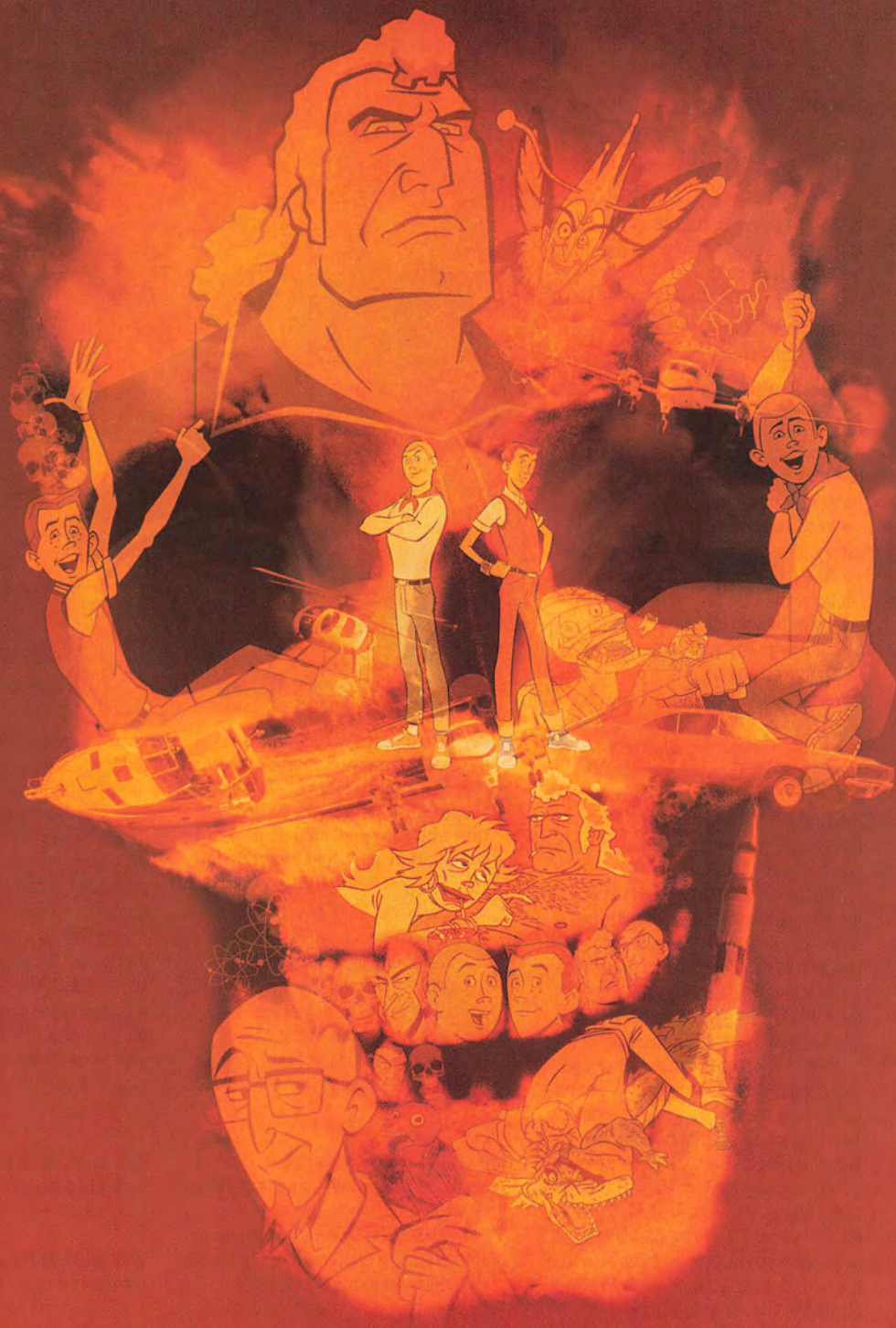
DAVID GEFFEN
College dropout once engaged to Cher; founded the Asylum and Geffen record labels.



JOSÉ FELICIANO
Blind singer-guitarist best known for his earthy Latin cover of the Doors' "Light My Fire."



TOM SCOTT
Grammy-winning jazz horn virtuoso who also recorded with Paul McCartney and Frank Sinatra.



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Ask Blender

SOLVING YOUR POP CONUNDRUMS SINCE 2001



From top:
Brian Jones,
Bob Dylan

In Bob Dylan's "Ballad of a Thin Man," is the "Mr. Jones" character meant to be Brian Jones?

CHRISTIAN MATTHEWS, SEATTLE

Dylan's famous straight stooge — who knows "something is happening here" but doesn't know what it is — was probably not Brian Jones. The Rolling Stone was the closest of Dylan's British musician friends; they often jammed together and had long transatlantic phone conversations. According to rumors, Dylan was penciled in as best man for Jones's planned wedding to Anita Pallenberg.

The folk-rock star did sometimes like to taunt the sensitive Jones, however, claiming he was the subject of the scornful lyric. The implication didn't do much for the pair's friendship — or for Jones's increasing paranoia. The notion that Dylan was singing about Jones didn't make much sense — the subject is fairly clearly a journalist who encounters Dylan's eccentric circle (Dylan confirmed this onstage many years later). Most Dylan experts point to a magazine scribe named Jeffrey Jones.

But Dylan clearly enjoyed needling the Stones. In May 1966, he laid into Jones and Keith Richards at a private London club, saying: "I could have written 'Satisfaction' — easy. But there's no fucking way you guys could have written 'Mr. Tambourine Man.' Think about it!"

A drunk Richards, falsely convinced that "Like a Rolling Stone" was about his band, lunged at Dylan, whose minder Tom Keylock scuffled with Richards before driving Dylan back to his hotel.

On the way, Keylock spotted the two angry Stones following in Jones's Rolls-Royce, veering wildly around the London streets. He claims that their car mounted the curb outside as he hustled an oblivious Dylan into the lobby. Crazy days!

What is the Filter song "Hey Man, Nice Shot" really about? I've heard that it's about Kurt Cobain's death.

STEVE LAMPIRIS, VIA E-MAIL

Richard Patrick's band was plagued for years by the rumor that its biggest hit was a tasteless jibe about Cobain's suicide. In fact, the song was a tasteless jibe about *another* suicide — that of R. Budd Dwyer, the Pennsylvania state treasurer who shot himself in the head in front of TV cameras and journalists in 1987.

Due to be sentenced on bribery charges, Dwyer called a press conference at which, after maintaining his innocence, he produced a gun, raised it to his mouth and pulled the trigger. Many TV news



Elvis Costello:
"Hey, these
aren't my pants!"

I've heard that Elvis Costello was (and still is) banned from *Saturday Night Live* for performing the anti-corporate song "Radio, Radio." Yet that track appears on a best-of-SNL compilation. Isn't that hypocritical?

MIKE TURNER, DENTON, TEXAS

For his 1977 debut appearance, Costello started playing "Less Than Zero" but stopped short, saying, "I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen, there's no reason to do this song here." (The track concerned British fascism.)

Then the band launched into "Radio, Radio." Lorne Michaels and NBC

bosses were fuming, partly because of the lyrics about the media trying to "anesthetize the way that you feel" and partly for making the show run too long. "We were told we'd never work on American television again and were physically chased out of the studio," Costello later recalled.

He was finally allowed back on in 1989, and the incident became fodder for a joke on the show's twenty-fifth anniversary. As the Beastie Boys were performing, Costello ran onstage and interrupted them, and they all began playing the offending tune.

reports showed excerpts of the gruesome footage, with some stations broadcasting the whole event.

In 1995, when Dwyer's widow heard that the hit song concerned her husband, she complained to the band's label, Reprise. Filter issued a statement saying, "The phrase 'Hey man, nice shot' is not a reference to the final act itself, but rather

an expression of the guts and determination of a person standing up for what they believe is right." *Riiiiight.*

Was Whitney Houston really once considered to be the next Bond girl?

NICOLE ANDREWS, DAYTON, OHIO

In 2001, when rumors about Houston's physical and mental problems were already rife, the troubled diva was reportedly meeting with Bond franchise owner Dana Broccoli about being the leading lady in *Die Another Day*. According to Hollywood gossip, the part was virtually in the bag for her. "I don't know her, but I think she's got a great voice," Pierce Brosnan said diplomatically.

Sadly for Houston, that September she made a shockingly skeletal appearance at Michael Jackson's Madison Square Garden anniversary show. Following the unfavorable publicity about her poor health and erratic mental state, the part went elsewhere — to the notably less skeletal Halle Berry. [BLENDER]



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WHAT

REPORT
FROM THE
ROCK & ROLL
FRONTLINE

HEROIN. CRACK. BURGLARY. HIT RECORDS. **THE LIBERTINES** — AND THEIR SELF-DESTRUCTIVE LEAD SINGER, PETE DOHERTY — HAVE DONE IT ALL. TOGETHER, THEY COULD STILL BE THE MOST EXCITING BRITISH BAND TO REACH AMERICA SINCE THE CLASH — SO LONG AS ONE OF THEM DOESN'T DIE FIRST. BY DORIAN LYNKEY

WASTER

THIS SHOULD HAVE been the Libertines' year. The previous 12 months had been turbulent ones for Britain's most talked-about band: a dizzying ticker-tape of fights, injuries, show cancellations, burglary, drug addiction and jail. By comparison, 2004 seemed to be proceeding smoothly. In March they played their biggest shows to date — three sellout gigs at London's 4,000-capacity Brixton Academy — and finished recording their wildly anticipated self-titled second album. True, each member of the band needed his own security guard in the studio, but at least the record was done.

Then, on May 14, it all fell apart. After a string of frighteningly chaotic gigs with his side project, Babyshambles, singer-guitarist Pete Doherty checked into the Priory, a rehab center in southwest London, to seek treatment for addiction to heroin and crack cocaine. According to his erratic online diary entries, he was placed on a suicide watch. Four days into his stay, he wrote: "Very deranged and murky recollection of the last few days. [...] I notice a needle sticking out of my arm and spots of blood. What the fuck is going on?"

It's a good question. In the two years since their first single was released, the Libertines have shot like an electric shock through the lackluster British music scene. Their fans boast a fervor not witnessed since the days of the Smiths,

while Britrock's elder statesmen have been equally enthusiastic: Erstwhile Clash guitarist Mick Jones produced both their albums; Morrissey booked them as his support; and their manager, Alan McGee, the veteran impresario who discovered Oasis, the Hives and the Jesus & Mary Chain, calls them "the most culturally significant band I've ever worked with."

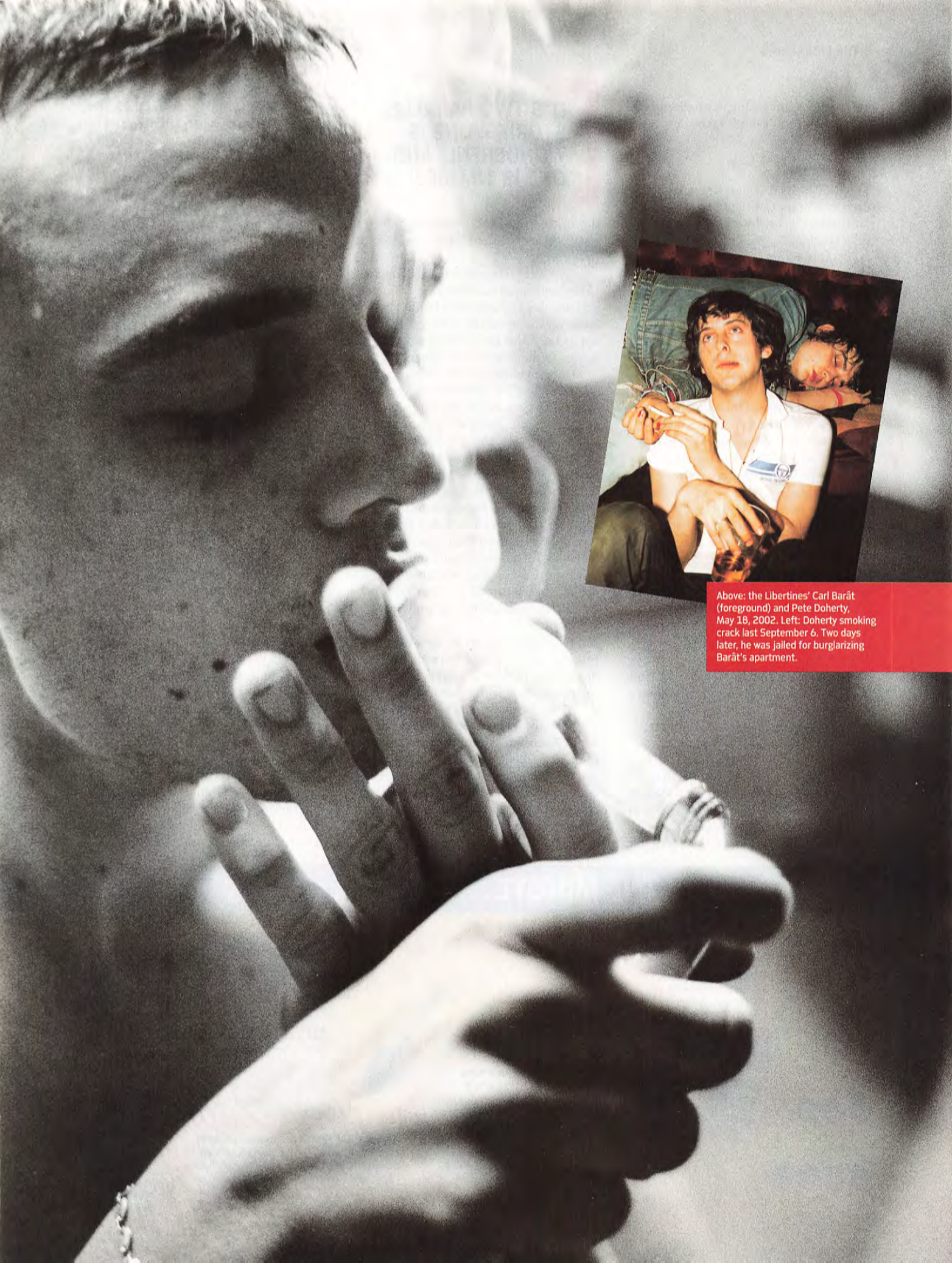
The Libertines' music is a vivid scrapbook of classic British bands: the attitude of the Sex Pistols, the tunes of

the Clash, the wit of the Kinks and the smarts of the Smiths. Their power derives from the chemistry between their two frontmen: Doherty, 25, and Carl Barât, 26. When you see them in action, you spy glimpses of Lennon and McCartney, Jagger and Richards or Morrissey and Marr. It's in the fizz of volatility and the crackle of homoeroticism; you're not sure whether they're about to punch each other or kiss each other.

Recently, however, that chemistry has gone awry. While Barât has emerged as the band's center of gravity, Doherty has spun ever more out of control. He's an inspired songwriter and magnetic performer but also a confessed drug addict and convicted thief. The unpredictable extremism that ignites his music seems now to be fueling his decline. Photographs taken in recent months show a different man from the puppyish charmer of two years ago: His bones jut through his skin; his eyes are pockets of shadow.

"There's two different strands in talking about the Libertines, isn't there?" says Geoff Travis, who signed the band to his Rough Trade label. "There's one which is marvelous — lovely, innocent madness backed up by brilliant music. And then there's the drugs, where there's nothing good you can say. It's like →

**"I NOTICE A NEEDLE
STICKING OUT OF MY
ARM, AND BLOOD.
WHAT'S GOING ON?"**



Above: the Libertines' Carl Barât (foreground) and Pete Doherty, May 18, 2002. Left: Doherty smoking crack last September 6. Two days later, he was jailed for burglarizing Barât's apartment.

★★★★★

Barât is sitting in the corner of a west London pub, nursing a glass of white wine, smoking a cigarette and retracing recent events. On the afternoon that he meets *Blender*, his bandmate is AWOL in Bangkok, having walked out of another treatment center — this time in Thailand — and the onus of promoting the Libertines' astonishing second album rests on his narrow shoulders; bassist John Hassall and American-born drummer Gary Powell are not giving interviews.

Barât's hurried mumble is sometimes indecipherable, even to British ears, but what he says is always frank and incisive. He looks razor-boned and aristocratic. He has French, Russian and Polish blood and, so family legend goes, distant ties to Basil Rathbone, the celluloid Sherlock Holmes from the 1940s. It comes as no surprise to learn that he is suffering from an absinthe hangover, but his tiredness runs deeper than that.

Barât says that without Doherty he would never have been in a band. Growing up around communes with his mother, an itinerant traveler, his first adult instinct was to seek stability. While he worked in the accounts department of the BBC and considered becoming an actor, his guitar gathered dust. Then, one

"IT'S TWO PARALLEL STORIES. ONE IS WONDERFUL, AND ONE IS TRAGIC."

"We were flung together," Barât says. "They say you can choose your friends and you can't choose your family, but for some reason we're like family. What I appreciated was his undying devotion to a dream in the face of utter adversity."

Doherty was born in Hexham, a small town in the far north of England. Like Barât, he had a far-flung childhood. He lived wherever his father, an army major, was stationed, which included Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Germany. As soon as he could, he moved to London in search of adventure. He once described his exploits in the capital as “like finding a manhole cover, lifting it up and then going under.”

"The chemistry between Peter and Carl has always been remarkable," Travis says. "There was an innocence about it then. They'd be on the Tube and they'd start singing songs and entertain the whole carriage. They were a continuous comedy musical act, but it was laced with the most amazing original songs, which was what was magical about it."

London's "squat" scene is an underground network of people living illegally in abandoned houses, offices and stores — and a fertile bohemian subculture that has spawned writers, artists and musicians. It's a transient, turbulent existence, and the Libertines' experiences in it resemble a collision between the worlds of William S. Burroughs and Charles Dickens. Their squats included a condemned pub, a brothel, a single mattress in a room accessible only through a broken window and a disused factory overseen by a hippie who called himself Delvin the Wizard. At one point, they took jobs as male escorts, then swiftly resigned when they realized they were expected to sleep with middle-aged men. "We were living life by the minute," Barât says, as if that explains everything.

The Libertines' lineup was equally fluid. At various stages they dabbled in poetry, comedy, jazz and skiffle, and their attitude toward their fellow band members was "the more, the merrier." John Hassall, who was still in school, became their on/off bass player, while their Spinal Tap-esque roll call of drummers included a woman named Sasha and a fifty-

"LIVING LIFE BY THE MINUTE..." The rise and fall of the Libertines

KEITH RICHARDS HEADS
LEVEL OF DRUG MAYHEM

June 3, 2002
The Libertines
release their
debut single, the
presciently titled
"What a Waster."

August 3, 2002
Pete Doherty disappears for 48 hours after a fight with bandmate Carl Barât.

June 2003
Doherty is suspended from the band and sent to rehab. The Libertines play European and U.K. tours without him.

July 25, 2003
Doherty robs
Barât's London
apartment.

August 12, 2003
Doherty tells a U.K. tabloid that he is addicted to heroin and crack.

September 8, 2003
Doherty is jailed for six months; his sentence is later reduced on appeal.

Rock star: Crack made me raid my friend's flat

FORMER LIBERTINES SINGER PLEADS FOR HELP AS HE FACES JAIL SENTENCE



Fielding, 30, became the subject of one of the most widely reported news stories in Britain when he was charged with possession of crack cocaine in his flat in London in 2005. He pleaded guilty to the charge in 2006 and was sentenced to 12 months in prison. He was released on bail in 2007 and is now living in a private care home.

By Sophie Hadden

He was a rock star once. Noel Fielding, 30, was a member of the band The Libertines, which was one of the most popular rock bands in Britain in the early 2000s. But now, the singer is facing a jail sentence for possession of crack cocaine. Fielding was charged in 2005 with possession of crack cocaine in his flat in London. He pleaded guilty to the charge in 2006 and was sentenced to 12 months in prison. He was released on bail in 2007 and is now living in a private care home.

Doherty (left) with Barât and (below) with band backstage at New York's Bowery Ballroom, May 5, 2003



something man known as Mr. Razzcocks.

At this stage, Barât says, the Libertines' ambitions were modest. "To be a band and tour and that sort of thing, I never really knew it existed. We just loved hearts, minds, melody, fine wines, women." He laughs. "We had that in common, and music was the best medium. It was a bag. We never really believed it would happen."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EVERYTHING CHANGED with the arrival of a new manager and the band's current drummer, Gary Powell, and with them the decision to pursue a record deal.

The Libertines, from left: Powell, Doherty, Barât, Hassall →

Gordon Raphael, the Strokes' producer, found himself sitting next to their manager, Doherty and Barât after the Strokes' first major London show in June 2001.

"[Barât and Doherty] had white shirts and caps and little suits, like vaudeville," he says. "Peter said, 'May I show you something?' He pulled me aside, got on his knee, put his cap in his hand and started singing me some traditional English song, looking me in the eye with a big smile. I was like, 'Wow, this guy's something else.' " →



October 8, 2003
Doherty is released from prison. The Libertines play the first of several reunion gigs.

May 14, 2004
Doherty enters rehab.

May 22, 2004
Doherty flees rehab.

May 28, 2004
Doherty speaks to U.K. tabloid *The Sun* and casts doubt on the Libertines' future. He then returns to rehab.



June 8, 2004
Doherty flies to Thailand for treatment at the Thamkrabok monastery.

June 13, 2004
Doherty walks out of Thamkrabok monastery and heads for Bangkok.

June 17, 2004
Doherty returns to London.



The Libertines play their own living room, March 21, 2003. Police were called to break up the gig.



Doherty at an HMV in-store in London, October 22, 2002.

Over the next few months, the Libertines transformed themselves into something much more powerful. After Rough Trade A&R man James Endecott saw them play that October, he told Geoff Travis, "I've just seen the Beatles in Hamburg in 1962." Travis checked them out, agreed with Endecott and signed them on Christmas Eve. "They were meant to be there at 5 o'clock," he says. "They eventually showed up at 8, signed the contracts and had a dance around the office in celebration."

Sudden success would bring Doherty and Barât money and fame, but they remained inseparable. They argued and even came to blows sometimes, but it seemed nothing was serious enough to drive a wedge between them. As Doherty wrote on his Web site: "Bilo + Biggles go together like a cup of Earl Grey + giggles." But this cheerful equation did not take account of what would happen when Bilo added hard drugs to the mix.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE EARLY MONTHS of 2002 were a blast. The band's debut single, "What a Waster," produced by former London Suede guitarist Bernard Butler, was a hit despite having too many curse words for radio, and the music press hailed them as the best new band in Britain. They were the hub of a vibrant social scene based around a London pub called Filthy McNasty's. And for the first time in years, they had money.

"We had some fucking good times after we got signed," Barât says, smiling. "We used to iron out £50 notes and put them in the fridge so when friends came around, you could nip to the fridge and give them a cool 50. That didn't last very long. The money ran out pretty quickly."

It ran out quickest for Doherty, because during the recording of the band's first album, *Up the Bracket*, he suddenly began spending a lot of it on heroin and crack cocaine. Even now, nobody is sure why. Both drugs are prevalent on the London squat scene, but Doherty had always resisted them. Maybe he was trying to rediscover some of the chaos and drama of the band's early days — he once described the day the Libertines

were signed as both the best and worst of his life, and he scorned the standard professional routine of touring and recording. Whatever the reason, his drug habit, and the fellow users it attracted, began to alienate Barât.

"It took all the fun away and put him on a different path," Barât says with exasperation. He admits he has done hard drugs himself: "I've had spells, but I've known that my fear of it is very valid, and I've known that it's crap anyway. It's something that I've made very clear I don't want to be around. And in light of that, I've lost him to them. It's an old story, bigger than any band on the planet, and there's only two possible endings to it. But sadly, my words didn't really sink in."

In late 2002, after five years of living with Doherty, Barât finally moved into his own apartment.

Doherty's problems weren't immediately apparent to anyone beyond the band's inner circle. They released *Up the Bracket* to glowing reviews. They visited America, making their thrillingly disorderly U.S. debut at 2002's Coachella festival and appearing alongside Marilyn Manson on *The Late Show With David*

Letterman. But stories began to circulate about Doherty's erratic behavior while on tour in the U.S. — he threw a tantrum in Rough Trade's New York offices and repeatedly went

"THE CHEMISTRY BETWEEN PETER AND CARL HAS ALWAYS BEEN REMARKABLE."

AWOL before gigs only to show up intoxicated moments before he was due onstage. A picture of him preparing to inject heroin appeared on the Internet. He had a son with Lisa Moorish, the singer who had had a love child with Oasis's Liam Gallagher.

Then, in June 2003, Doherty simply failed to show up for the beginning of the Libertines' European tour. He planned to rejoin the band in Paris, but Barât called to say he wasn't welcome. Instead, he was suspended from the band and sent to rehab. "It was the hardest phone call I've ever made in my life," Barât says.

The rest of the Libertines pressed on with their European shows and festival dates, which Barât describes as "fucking horrible." Worse was to come. On the night of July 25, while the rest of the band was touring Japan, Doherty was arrested in London. He had kicked in the door of Barât's basement apartment and stolen an antique guitar, video recorder, laptop computer, CD player and harmonica.

He pleaded guilty to burglary, but his motives are still unclear. It is assumed that he was raising money to buy drugs and also, perhaps, taking revenge on Barât for ousting him from



At the NME Awards in London, February 12, 2004

Doherty with friend and
Babyshambles singer
Steve Bedlow in London,
August 1, 2003



the band. If Barât knows the reason, he won't say. He lights a cigarette and murmurs an awkward "I don't know."

Blender spoke to Doherty himself in October last year, after a show following his release from prison, and asked him about the burglary. He was apologetic but angry. "Carl always had this sacred idea of one day having a place of his own. I entered his space. I had to apologize for that. But if I raped his flat, he raped me by taking the band off without me and playing my songs."

Even with Barât just a few feet away talking to someone else, Doherty was loudly indignant. "Carl said he was having to deal with someone he didn't recognize, but to me that was hypocritical. In the past I've had nothing stronger than weed, and yet Carl has been taking heroin — and I never tried to kick him out of the band. And yet I enter that world, and all of a sudden I'm a social outcast. I couldn't handle that."

While Doherty was out on bail, he made his drug problems public by talking to a London newspaper, although he later claimed that his comments had been taken out of context. Meanwhile, former Creation Records head Alan McGee became the Libertines' new manager.

On September 8, 2003, Doherty was jailed for six months. The sentence was subsequently reduced to two months, of which Doherty served half. On October 8, Barât met Doherty at the exit gates as he left. "I didn't know what I was going to find, but I couldn't have lived with myself if I hadn't gone," he says. "And I wanted to make sure that the bad guys didn't get him. The time he was in prison, part of me was relieved that he was safe. It sounds ridiculous, but at the time there was some proper crazy stuff happening around him. One step away from death."

That night, the whole band played an unplanned reunion show at a pub outside of London. A week later, they headlined Rough Trade's twenty-fifth anniversary show, and Doherty seemed reinvigorated. "I know what it is we've got, and I very nearly threw it all away. I'm glad now I've got the chance," he told *Blender*. "I've learned a lesson. Basically, it was a choice — crack or Carlos. And I chose Carlos."

IT SEEMED AS IF the Libertines had turned a corner. They played a series of thrilling shows and traveled to Paris to write songs for the second album. The idea was that it would just be four walls and no distractions — but Doherty soon found ways of falling back into his old habits: "People drop by," Barât says, "connections get made and we have to find a new place." →

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Under the circumstances, Rough Trade's Geoff Travis is amazed the record was completed at all: "It's remarkable," he says. "The odds on them making it were 10-1 against."

Everyone who knows Doherty, however, testifies to his irrepressible creativity. He is the force behind the Libertines' dozens of spontaneous "guerilla gigs." Even while addicted to drugs, he never stopped writing; by some estimates the band has a stockpile of more than 150 songs. "Peter will go to sleep with a guitar in his hand," says Dominic Masters, the frontman of London band the Others and a friend of Doherty's. "If I'm lucky, I might get a couple of songs a week. Peter will get a couple of songs a day."

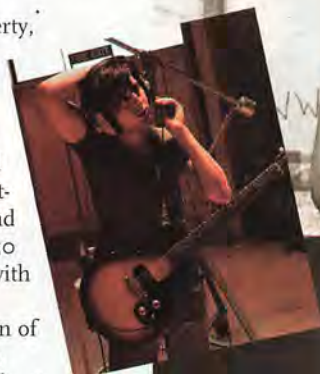
Even during the darkest parts of 2003, Doherty was active. He formed his own band, Babyshambles, and worked with his old friend Pete "Wolfman" Wolfe. Wolfman and Doherty's single, "For Lovers," entered the British Top 10 last April.

Many people who know him will talk about "the wrong kind of people" who surround Doherty — but none of them will mention names. The guitarist has always been a charmingly frank and accessible figure. "Peter's got an unusual ability to connect with anybody," Masters says. "He sees everyone as equal, whether you're a guy on the street begging for money or a kid coming to watch the band. He's a perfect gentleman."

For Geoff Travis, though, there is a darker side to Doherty's close relationship with his fans. "Playing a gig in your living room is fantastic on one level," he says. "Playing a gig and having 16-year-olds give you money so you can buy drugs just seems awful."

With Mick Jones at the helm once again, the Libertines' second album came together during this past spring under the most trying of circumstances. It is an exceptionally intimate and unguarded record that dramatizes all the conflicts of the past two years and leaves the listener both transfixed and uncomfortably voyeuristic. On "Can't Stand Me Now," the two frontmen fling accusations at each other. "Your light fingers through

"HAVING 16-YEAR-OLDS GIVE YOU MONEY SO YOU CAN BUY DRUGS IS JUST AWFUL."



↑ Top: Doherty in London, September 6, 2003; inset: Barât recording the new album earlier this year

the door," Barât charges. "Oh, no — you've got it the wrong way around," Doherty retaliates. "You shot me up and blamed it on the brown."

What must it have been like to sing these words and to hear them sung back? "It was fucking heart-rending," Barât says. "But then we come back to it onstage, and because we're always forgiving, what we're singing isn't necessarily what the song was written about. A song about complete contempt can become a song about complete solidarity." In the Libertines, evidently, there is no middle ground. "Absolutely. Love-hate, do-or-die, never a minute of mediocrity."

LEARN TO SPEAK LIBERTINES

Gor blimey! Want to enter the archaic world of the Libertines? Here's your handy phrasebook

Biggles	Fictional World War II >>> airman created by Captain W.E. Johns
Blag	Scam or swindle
Brown	Heroin
Earl Grey	Fancy English tea
Flat	Apartment
Scrap	Fight
Skiffle	Simple, pre-rock & roll form of British guitar music
Squat	Illegally occupied house
Tube	Subway



UNDERGROUND

As the album was being mixed, Doherty checked into the Priory rehab clinic. After just a week, he walked out and gave an agonized, paranoid interview with a British tabloid in which he claimed he had left the Libertines. But after a lightning visit to France and another aborted stay at the Priory, he turned up unannounced at Barât's London club night on June 7, where the two estranged friends played an impromptu set of Libertines songs. From there Doherty flew to Thailand to detox at the Thamkrabok monastery. He lasted just

three days there before fleeing to Bangkok, where he resurfaced at a radio station and performed an acoustic set that included songs by the Strokes, the Clash and Christina Aguilera. Upon his return to Britain on June 17, he was swiftly arrested for alleged possession of a switchblade knife.

As of press time, Doherty is still estranged from the band and awaiting trial. Barât hasn't spoken to him since June 7. "That's the last time I saw him — happy and optimistic. Unfortunately, things have taken a bit of a turn." He sounds suddenly weary. "I feel instinctively that I should try my best to look after him, but it's bloody hard and I don't know what to do."

Nobody in or around the Libertines can predict what will happen. "We're up and down like a yo-yo," Geoff Travis says. "One minute we're in terrible fear and we think the whole thing's over, and the next minute we have a surge of optimism. There's no long-term plan. You think, 'Well, why was Kurt Cobain on tour? He should have been looked after.' Trying to wring some money out of the Libertines is the last thing that we're interested in."

The new album could turn out to be either the Libertines' moment of triumph in the face of tragedy or their epitaph. Amid such uncertainty, it is painfully powerful for the average listener. You can only imagine what it sounds like to the people who made it.

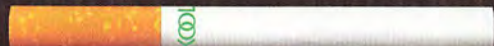
"We got a record by putting everything that was going down right now on the page," Barât says, draining his wine glass. "And it's a fucking epic saga, as I think you'll agree. It's a very sad story, but then there's still some hope." He qualifies himself: "I think." Then he smiles tentatively. "I hope." [BLENDER]



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TWISTED SISTER

SHE USED TO FLASH CHURCH CONGREGATIONS AND PLAY THE GUITAR NAKED. BUT NOW **ASHLEE SIMPSON** IS JUST A "NORMAL AMERICAN GIRL." APART FROM THE FAMOUS SIBLING. AND THE RECORD DEAL. AND THE REALITY-TV SHOW . . .

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHERYL NIELDS

Ashlee Simpson
simultaneously
mimes amused ennui
and the letter Z!

ROMPER BY KEMBRA; KNEE
SOCKS BY MISS DATER.
SHOES BY CONVERSE.
EARRINGS AND NECKLACE
BY AMANDA RAY CLEGG



JUST AS IT does in Disney movies, the sun almost always shines in SimpsonWorld. But here's something a little dark. When she was 11, Ashlee Simpson hated her sister. While she never admits this in so many words, her actions back then spoke volumes. She resented Jessica's elder status, the way her parents fawned over their firstborn's dreams of pop stardom — often, Ashlee was convinced, at the expense of her own dreams. She felt inferior, awkward, left out. A popular girl at school in Waco, Texas, Jessica would regularly have friends over, banishing Ashlee to her bedroom upstairs.

But Ashlee was a combative force even as a preteen, and she liked nothing better than embarrassing her sister in front of her friends. And so, wearing only a bathrobe, she would stomp down to Jessica's gathering, disrobe before everyone and play the guitar naked, all the while grinning like a lunatic.

"And you know what the funny thing was?" Ashlee says now, eyes wide. "The more Jessica begged me to stop, the more I tried to annoy her!"

You must really have loathed her.

"No, no, not at all. I was just, you know, having fun. I've always been kind of flamboyant."

And, it transpires, rather fond of nudity. Five years earlier, her father, a minister, took her to his church for the first time. The young Ashlee arrived barefoot and strode up the aisle to the pulpit, then pulled her dress up over her head before performing a slow 360-degree pirouette. "I was like, 'Here I am, naked and a complete mess! You'd all better accept me, because this is who I am!'"



Less coolly, Ashlee's other T-shirt says POLKA.

The members of the congregation weren't impressed. They never accepted Ashlee, considering her a little too weird and wild. But Ashlee didn't care. She laughed then, and she laughs now.

It is at this point that you would expect her mother, Tina, sitting no more than three feet away, to offer some kind of rational explanation for her daughter's wanton behavior. But no. Tina, who likes to describe herself as an unconventional parent, is laughing right along with her.

"If she wanted to show up in church in the shortest skirt imaginable — as long as it wasn't indecent, of course — then good for her," says the 44-year-old Tina brightly. "I didn't care if she wanted to go to Mass in nothing but a pair of boots and a leotard. I always encouraged self-expression."

"See," Ashlee explains, "Jessica's always been the quiet, conservative one. Me, I'm the artsy one, the girl in the tutu and the Converse sneakers, the girl with knots in her hair."

She lifts her recently bleached black mop from her white porcelain shoulder for inspection. What do we see? Knots.

"There you go!" she says. "I'm pretty consistent, huh?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ASHLEE SIMPSON MAY claim not to have been adopted, but really, she has about as much in common with her sister as she does with 50 Cent. Where Jessica has clearly been designed by frat-boy scientists in pursuit of the perfect blonde — chocolate-drop eyes, shampoo-commercial hair, teeth that go on forever and a general air of compliance — Ashlee more resembles your archetypal Blink-182 fan (female variety). She's smaller than Jessica, more compact. She doesn't

possess the same plunging cleavage or the halo of Stepford Wives effervescence, and where Jessica appears both innocent and clueless, Ashlee is fiery and comparatively smart. Their dress sense, also, is radically different: Jessica wouldn't be seen dead in her sister's ripped jeans, which are so baggy in the crotch that small animals could nest there with no one the wiser.

Professionally, though, the sisters do have similarities, and for this we can look to their father — and manager. It is Joe Simpson, 46, who takes credit for reinventing Jessica from a second-division Britney Spears into America's reigning sweetheart. And it is Joe who decided that his second daughter could also benefit from the presence of an around-the-clock camera crew to help promote her album. For the past nine months, daughter number 2 has been filming her own MTV reality program. It is called, to prevent confusion, *The Ashlee Simpson Show*.

"I decided that this was the best way to launch her as her own person," says Dad, a tall, bleached-blond hunk of a man who wears tight jeans and an even tighter shirt. "It solidifies her as a person, and it also launches her as a musician and an artist." He peels back his lips in a wide smile to reveal Jessica's perfect teeth. "You see where I'm coming from?"

The Ashlee Simpson Show, says its star, is a straightforward documentary series, nothing at all like her sister's glitzier domestic soap opera, *Newlyweds*. Running for just 10 episodes, it features the 19-year-old in the process of writing and recording her debut album, *Autobiography*. That's it, she says, nothing more. It's all about the music.

"This show will run for one season only," Ashlee insists. "Jessica may be happy having cameras in her life 24/7, but not me. It's not natural; it ain't healthy. I think a second series would drive me crazy."

She laughs.

"I'm serious! This show is simply to introduce me and my album to the public. Once I've done that, that's it. See ya!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ASHLEE'S ALBUM WAS produced and cowritten by John Shanks, who has collaborated with Michelle Branch and Sheryl Crow, and it has a lot more edge than you would perhaps expect from the sister of Jessica Simpson. It's the sound of a young woman who, in the quest of Finding Herself, seems to have swallowed Pink and Christina Aguilera whole. "La La" is about having sex on the kitchen floor. "Surrender" charts the death of a relationship. And the second single, →

"JESSICA MAY BE HAPPY HAVING CAMERAS IN HER LIFE 24/7, BUT NOT ME. IT'S NOT NATURAL; IT AIN'T HEALTHY."

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you're taller
than Jessica.



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SIBLING RIVALRY

In the annals of pop history, have there ever been younger brothers or sisters whose career achievements eclipsed their elder sib? Only one way to find out . . .

LITTLE SIB ANDY YORKE

BIG SIB THOM YORKE

LITTLE SIB'S CAREER Sure, Radiohead might be the most acclaimed rock band of the past decade, but what about Unbelievable Truth? Imagine Thom Yorke without the lazy eye or . . . well, the talent, and you'll have Kid B, whose band released two barely noticed albums before breaking up in 2000.

THE WINNER Big Sib

LITTLE SIB CHRIS JAGGER >>>

BIG SIB MICK JAGGER

LITTLE SIB'S CAREER The poster child for never-say-die chutzpah, Chris has deftly avoided comparisons to his iconic brother by never having anything close to a hit over the course of his 30-year career.

THE WINNER Big Sib

LITTLE SIB MARK WAHLBERG

BIG SIB DONNIE WAHLBERG

LITTLE SIB'S CAREER At the height of New Kids on the Block mania, Marky Mark and his rippling abs stormed the charts with "Good Vibrations." A decade later, Mark has forged a reputation as a serious actor, and Donnie's riding his coattails. Who's the real winner here? You are! Because now neither Wahlberg makes records.

THE WINNER Little Sib!

LITTLE SIB DANNI MINOGUE

BIG SIB KYLIE MINOGUE

LITTLE SIB'S CAREER Pint-size Kylie is a superstar in her native Australia, and her even littler sister has a handful of dance-pop hits and TV roles as well. But unlike Kylie, Dannii never rode a mechanical bull in her skivvies for a TV commercial.

THE WINNER Big Sib STEVE KANDELL



Does she have a sister? Yes! Kylie (left) and Dannii Minogue

"Shadow," details just what life was like living in the footsteps of a rapaciously ambitious cheerleader type:

"I was 6 years old when my parents went away," she sings. "I was left inside a broken life that I couldn't wish away/She was beautiful/She had everything and more. . . /Somebody listen, please/It used to be so hard being me."

Revelatory stuff for a girl who prides herself on familial diplomacy, but

ultimately Ashlee is neither Pink nor Christina, and so by the time we reach the chorus, she has sugarcoated the sentiment. "Everything's cool now," she sings. But you are not especially convinced, largely because lines like "Living in the

shadow of someone else's dream/Trying to find a hand to hold/But every touch felt cold to me" convince you that her adolescence was a time of anguish, jealousy and countless office visits to the local shrink.

"No! It was nothing like that!" she shrieks, laughing off the suggestion. "People always seem to think that I struggled because I was the younger sister, but I never did. Sure, I wanted attention occasionally, but we were such a close family, and Jessica and I were the best of friends. Trust me, I've grown up into a very well-adjusted adult." She takes a breath. "The only thing that really bothers me these days is the voice inside my head that fucks with me."

Voice? What voice?

"You know, the voice, the one that tells you you're going to fail, that you're ugly and hopeless and pathetic." She looks up at *Blender*, then at Mom, suddenly anxious. "We all have that voice, right?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ASHLEE SIMPSON WAS born 19 years ago in Waco, Texas. Her mother was an aerobics instructor, her father a youth minister and adolescent therapist who specialized in cases of child abuse. Ashlee was a natural performer, and she loved to dance. By the time she hit her teenage years, she was one of Texas's most accomplished young ballet prodigies and received an invitation from the Kirov



The other Simpsons, from left: Jessica, Ashlee, Joe, Tina

Ballet to study the craft further in Moscow. This was an incredible opportunity, but Dad refused to let her go. Instead, the family moved en masse to Los Angeles to help Jessica pursue pop stardom. Unsurprisingly, Ashlee was devastated, but Dad encouraged her to become one of her sister's backing dancers. That was all very well, but it was hardly *Swan Lake*.

"It was fun, sure," Ashlee says, "but it was also pretty horrible. The other dancers were mean to me because I was the shitty younger sister. They gave me a tough time. Now that I have a career of my own, though, those same people are calling to congratulate me. Stupid hypocrites. . . ."

She quickly tired of playing second fiddle to Jessica and instead began pursuing an acting career, appearing in several commercials and sitcoms before landing a regular role on the teen drama *7th Heaven*. Acting satisfied her only temporarily; her idols remained singers, most of them famous before she was born: Chrissie Hynde, Pat Benatar, Joan Jett. She wanted to sing, desperately, and

eventually her father shifted his focus from one daughter to the other, with rapid results. Within months, he had secured her a deal and her own MTV show.

"I used to want to be an actor myself when I was young," Dad says, "but my family was real poor, so that was never a realistic possibility for me. But now I'm happy living vicariously through my children. See, I'm a creative person, and this is my way of doing what I was born to do — to be creative. That's my gift to my girls."

Last night, the family — minus Jessica, who is on tour — gathered to watch the first episode of *The Ashlee Simpson Show*. Ashlee was thrilled with what she saw.

"It was great, because it portrayed me as me, a normal, ordinary American girl →



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with a big nose and a big zit on her chin," she says. "I think a lot of people will relate to me, because really, I'm just like everybody else."

★★★★★

IT IS DISCONCERTING to spend any amount of time in SimpsonWorld. Aside from the quietly ferocious ambition each family member possesses, they seem a remarkably levelheaded bunch. Fame and fortune, they claim, has altered their lives very little. The only casualty, Mom jokes, is Joe, who uses the *f* word more now as a manager than he ever did when he was a minister. Otherwise, they remain utterly unaffected and palpably harmonious, protective of one another and suspicious of outsiders.

For example: Ashlee recently landed a new boyfriend, but he's no tattooed tough from Good Charlotte or Sum 41. He's Ryan Cabrera, a longtime family friend and singer-songwriter who is not only currently supporting Jessica on tour but is also managed by Joe. This means that the relationship enjoys parental approval, which is just as well, because Ashlee adores Cabrera. When she tells *Blender* that she recently took him home to "make out with him all night," it seems to suggest that unlike her sister, she's an advocate of sex before marriage — or does it?

"Oh, I — I don't talk about that," she stutters. "Sorry, but that's my business. It's private."

Something else that's private is her sex appeal. It is a family stipulation that Ashlee will never willfully titillate her audience.

"I know exactly what's under this T-shirt," she says, pulling at the neck and peering down her top, "but I'm going to keep it under wraps. Maybe I'll take a few pictures for myself, because I have to tell you, I do have great tits! I am 19, after all. I'll take some pictures now to show them to my future husband. 'See,' I'll tell him, 'I did have a great rack once!'"

Ashlee laughs; her mom laughs. They look just like the Brady Bunch.

"We're best friends," Mom says, winking. "And if you want to know why both of my daughters are so well-adjusted, it's because I've always taught them to know exactly who they are, to be happy with who they are and to stay that way. You know, all the best stars are the most grounded ones."

"Like, like — Julia Roberts!" Ashlee says, sighing. "She is just so sweet, so nice. That's who I want to be when I grow up. Julia Roberts. Think I'll manage it?"

Her parents may well see to it that she does. [BLENDER]

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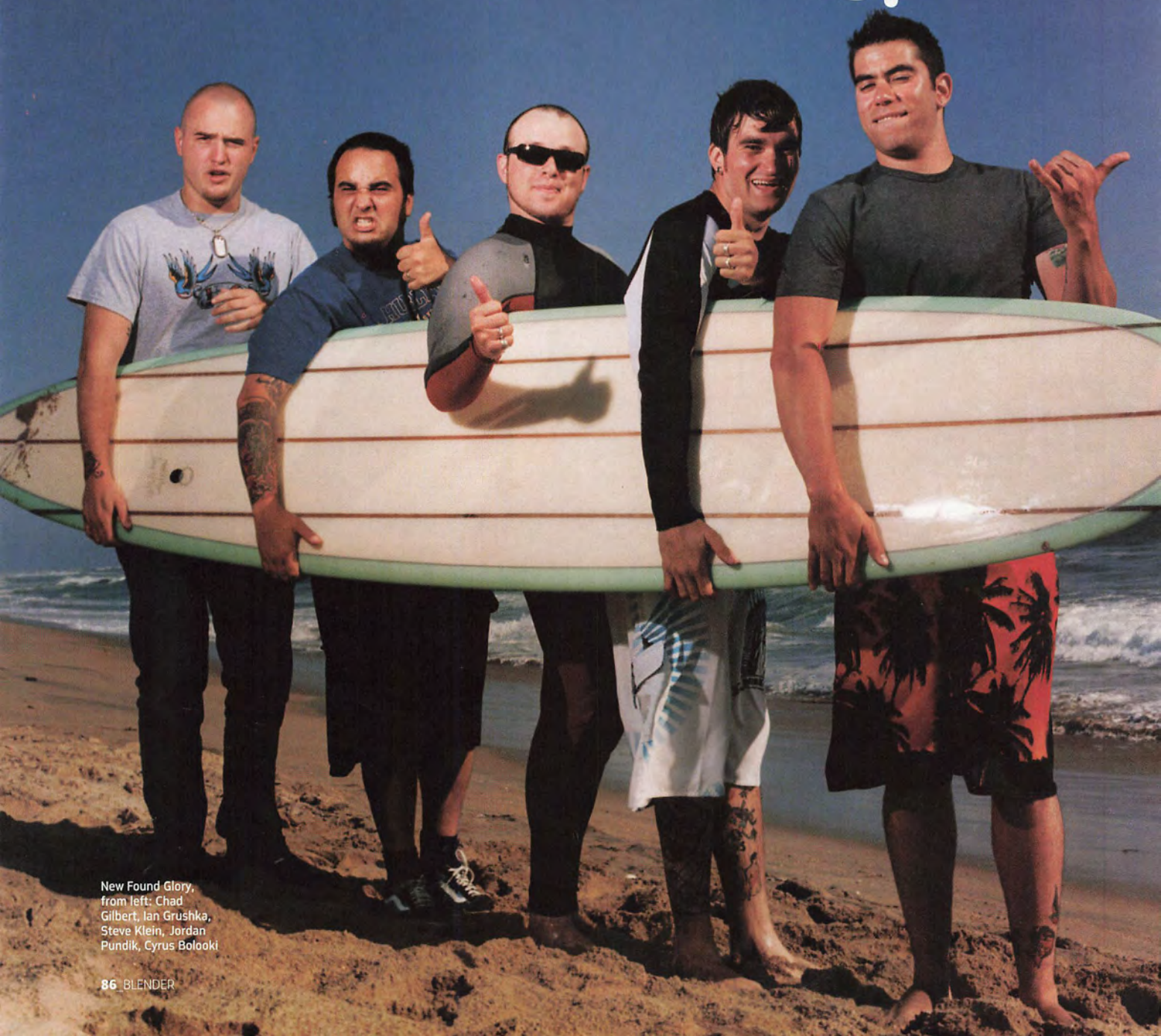
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"WE'RE THE NEW BEACH BOYS!"

→ What are the true beach-party essentials, according to emo-metallers **New Found Glory**? Why, booze, burgers and "man diapers," of course!

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS



New Found Glory,
from left: Chad
Gilbert, Ian Grushka,
Steve Klein, Jordan
Pundik, Cyrus Bolooki



"BEING FROM FLORIDA, we never really learned anything about surfing," says 26-year-old New Found Glory bassist Ian Grushka.

"Smoking pot is more of a sport in Florida than surfing."

He has a fair point. But it does raise the question of why Grushka and his four fellow emo-metallers are at Huntington Beach, California's Chuck Dent Surf Center, about to spend a chunk of their *Blender*-provided \$848 on a surfboard. The answer lies with New Found Glory's frontman and new hang-10 enthusiast, Jordan Pundik.

"I can't do gnarly tricks or anything," says the singer, 24, as *Blender* steers him away from the \$2,500 boards. "But I can stand up and ride. I do it to take my mind off things."

Those things would presumably include the string of disastrous relationships that provide fodder for the emotionally raw lyrics most recently exhibited on the band's new album, *Catalyst*. Personal woes aside, however, things couldn't look better for the band, whose star has risen rapidly since they relocated from Florida to California three years ago. *Catalyst* debuted at number 3, and just yesterday their new single, "All Downhill From Here," defeated Usher's "Burn" on *TRL*. Tomorrow, they will set off for a clutch of radio shows before joining the Vans Warped Tour.

"There are always good bands, and it's great to meet fans, but since we've gotten more successful it is hard to watch from the front," says guitarist Chad Gilbert, 23. "At home in L.A. I'll go to see a hardcore band. Hardcore fans don't give a fuck who I am, and that's cool."

Equally cool is the presence today of champion pro surfer Tim Curran, who shares a manager with the band and has gamely volunteered to participate in this afternoon's planned surf trip-cum-beach party. It is also probably the fame of Curran, rather than that of the band, that prompts the surf shop's owners to sell Pundik a longboard at half price. This bargain purchase means that the quintet still have around half of their original budget to spend at a nearby supermarket on such beach-party essentials as burgers, booze, sunblock, firewood, marshmallows, a plastic baseball bat and . . . a pack of "disposable protective underwear"?

"This way we can just shit ourselves on the beach!" explains a joking (we hope) Grushka.

Other equally inexplicable purchases include a toy dog with a mortarboard on its head, and a Barbie-type doll.

"That's going on tour with us," says

guitarist Steve Klein, 24, after returning to the band van. "We had a Master P doll — you pulled a string and it went 'Uuu-unngh!' We got a lot of mileage out of that."

As we drive to a nearby state beach called Bolsa Chica, talk turns to the band's 1999 EP of movie-theme covers, *From the Screen to Your Stereo*, and, in particular, its version of Céline Dion's "My Heart Will Go On," a tune *Blender* recently named one of the 50 Worst Songs of All Time.

"The song really sucked," agrees drummer Cyrus Bolooki, 24. "But we did it for the people who didn't have our original stuff, so that they could at least sing along for one song and have a good time."

We can assume, then, that the band won't be rushing to see Ms. Dion's show in Las Vegas. . . .

"Not unless she's going to masturbate and let us *bukkake* her," Grushka says, laughing.

While the rest of the band have made California their permanent home, Grushka and Klein will soon be relocating back to Florida.

"We never go to parties; we never go out," Grushka says. "I feel like I'm not cool enough to live here. In & Out Burger's the only reason I want to stay."

Upon arriving at Bolsa Chica, the band set up camp by a fire pit. A gale has developed, though, and all sensible attempts to light the sucker prove futile. Finally, Gilbert opts to take the non-sensible route by picking up a lighter fluid-drenched piece of wood and trying to ignite it with a cigarette lighter. Miraculously, the guitarist succeeds without turning himself into a human torch, and soon New Found Glory are joyfully cooking marshmallows like so many

Screw you — this is 10 items or less!



I sacrifice this melon to Satan!



Surf's down! I mean 'up!' Damn!



heavily tattooed, foulmouthed Boy Scouts.

Pundik, however, has more athletic endeavors in mind. Having waxed his board, he heads down toward the water with Curran.

"The waves aren't all that good," notes the pro. "But you're riding the whitewash when you're learning anyway."

In truth, as Pundik flaps around in the water trying to fight the current, he doesn't look

like someone who's going to be riding much of anything. Those of us left on the shore joke that we'll have to drive down the coast to pick him up. But the smile is wiped off *Blender*'s face when, with a borrowed board, we take to the surf as well. Minutes later, *Blender*, even more of a surf novice than Pundik, is 200 yards downwind from where we started, violently regurgitating a gelatinous mixture of salt water and half-digested marshmallows onto the previously golden sands. Curran, of course, effortlessly darts through the shallows, "riding" waves that don't look big enough to support the weight of a hamster.

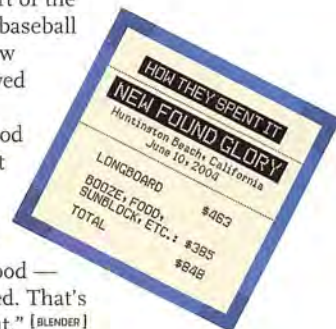
"The board felt good and I caught a wave, but it was hard," Pundik admits

once we reconvene on dry land.

Klein stumbles behind Pundik, clutching a board, his eyes red and raw with salt water: "It was hard to get up, it was hard to get on. And now I'm blind!"

Spirits improve when the *Blender* photographer asks the band to pose with their new surfboard. This prompts a communal rendition of "Good Vibrations" and a cry of "We're the new Beach Boys!" from Gilbert. Even better, a passing carload of beach police fail to notice our caches of liquor — or object to the fact that the band has spent part of the afternoon playing baseball with a series of now thoroughly destroyed watermelons.

"This was a good afternoon!" Gilbert concludes as he climbs into the van. "To hang out with friends, eat food — and not get arrested. That's what life's all about." [*BLENDER*]



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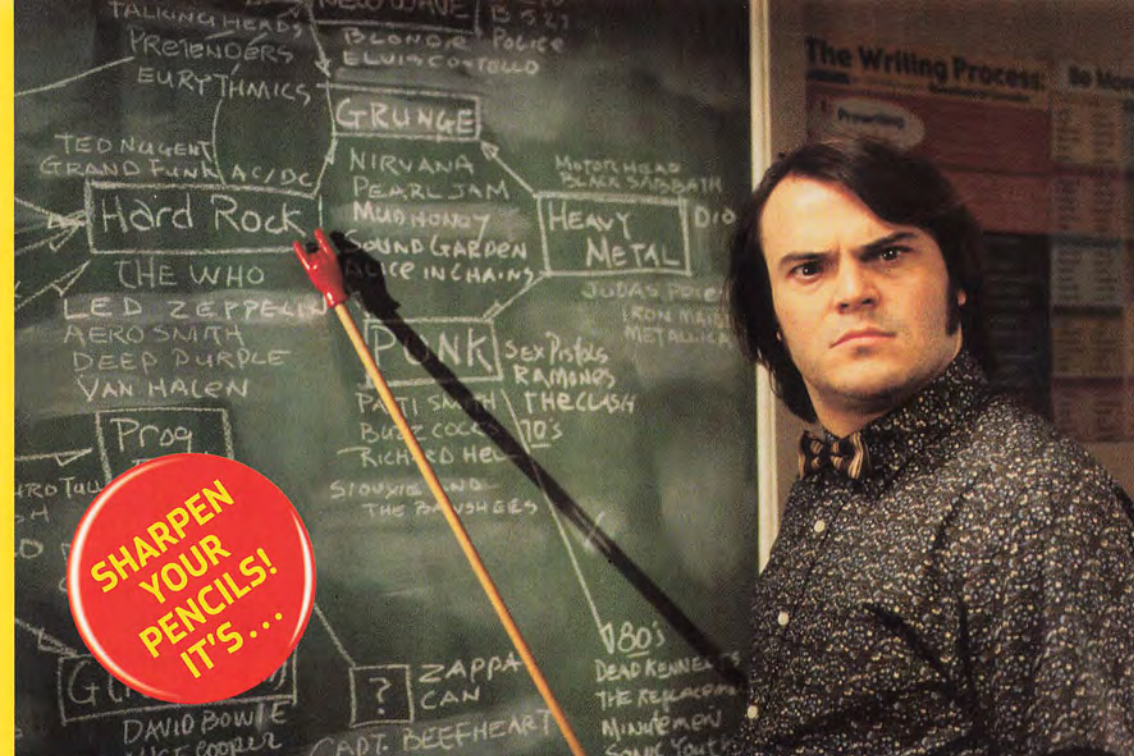
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THE ULTIMATE

ROCK & ROLL QUIZ

Like answering questions? Love tales of rock-star misbehavior? Then you'll like and/or love this opportunity to prove that you really are the grand poobah of sex-and-drugs-oriented trivia. Let the games commence!

BY DANNY ECCLESTON, ANDREW HARRISON, STEVE KANDELL AND BEN MITCHELL



1 It's New Year's Eve 2003. Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson is having dinner with his son and daughter-in-law in Naples, Florida. After a few drinks, he:

- A** Throws a fork at diners at a neighboring table for repeatedly singing the chorus to "Tom Sawyer" in a grating falsetto
- B** Is overheard on his cellphone saying "No, right, seriously, I love you, man," to Geddy Lee while urinating on his car
- C** Runs off without paying his bar tab
- D** Becomes involved in an altercation involving the house band and has to be subdued with a stun gun

ANSWER: D

2 Aggravated mayhem, assault with a deadly weapon, larceny, torture, false imprisonment, sale or transportation of a controlled substance, forcible oral copulation, making terrorist threats: Which of these offenses has Rick James never been charged with?

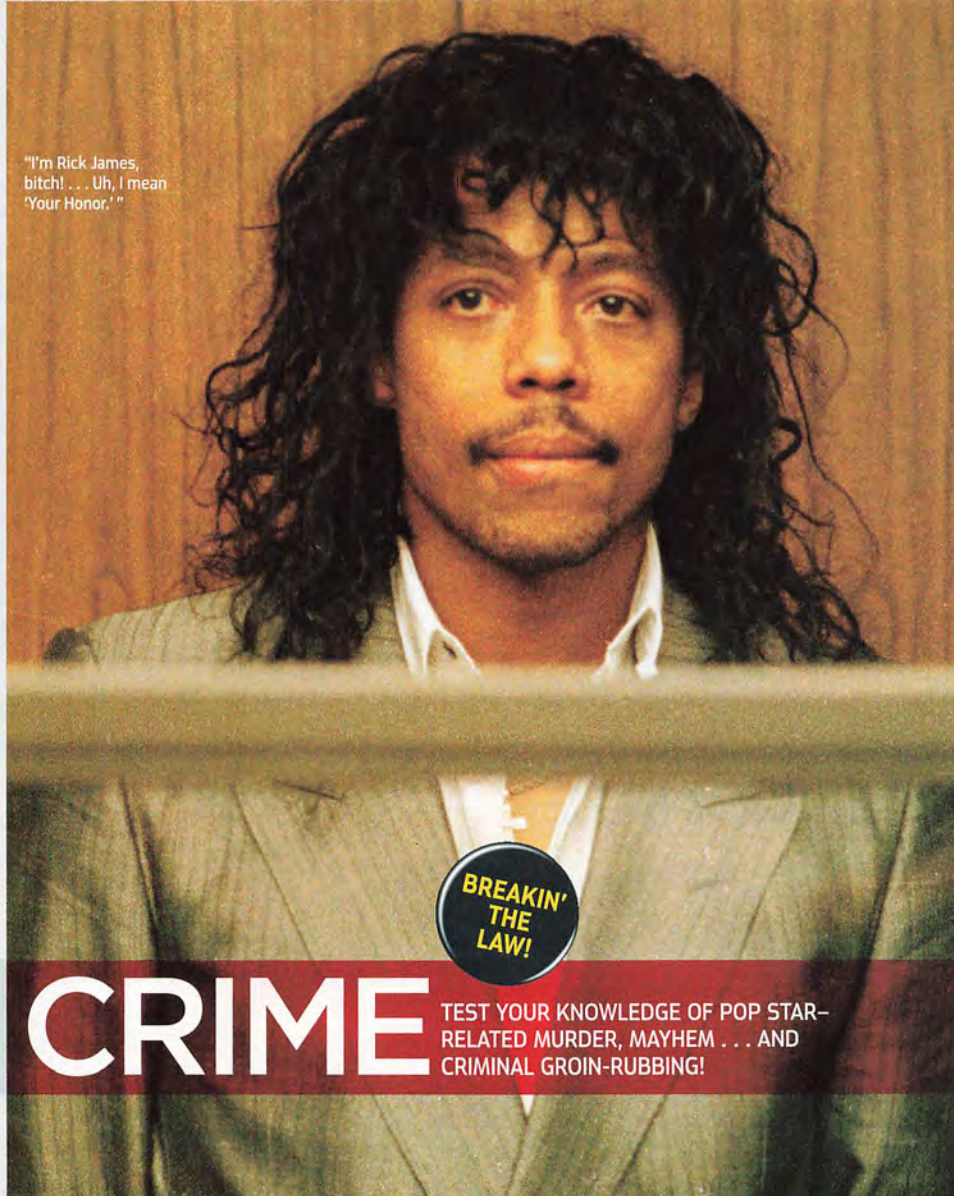
ANSWER: LARCENY

3 Of the following statements about James Brown's PCP-fueled interstate car chase with police in September 1988, which is untrue?

- A** The chase began when Brown terrorized an insurance seminar near his office in Augusta, Georgia, with a shotgun, demanding to know if anyone had used his private bathroom without permission
- B** Brown drove for six miles on the rims of his pickup truck after police shot out the tires
- C** Brown claimed to have been on an undercover mission for President Ronald Reagan when apprehended
- D** Upon finally being arrested, Brown sang an impromptu version of "Georgia on My Mind" and performed his celebrated "good foot" dance for police officers

ANSWER: C. ALL THE OTHERS ARE TRUE.

"I'm Rick James, bitch! . . . Uh, I mean 'Your Honor.'"



BREAKIN' THE LAW!

CRIME

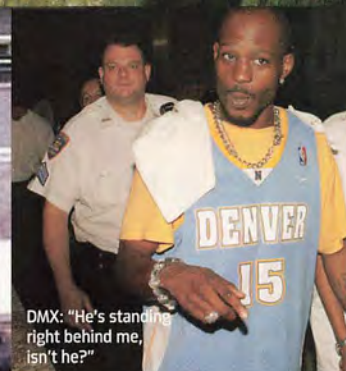
TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF POP STAR-RELATED MURDER, MAYHEM . . . AND CRIMINAL GROIN-RUBBING!



Match the star with the regulation he or she was accused of breaching while aboard an aircraft:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| A PETER BUCK | B WHITNEY HOUSTON | C IZZY STRADLIN | D COURTNEY LOVE |
| 1 VERBAL ABUSE | 2 ATTACKING STAFF | 3 SMOKING | 4 URINATING IN THE AISLE |

ANSWERS: A-2; B-3; C-4; D-1



5 What do DMX and Janis Joplin have in common?

- A** They have both been arrested for mail fraud
- B** They have both been arrested for saying naughty words in a public place
- C** They have both been arrested for cockfighting
- D** They have both been arrested for impersonating a federal agent while high on crack

ANSWER: B. DMX IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, 2003; JOPLIN IN TAMPA, FLORIDA, 1969

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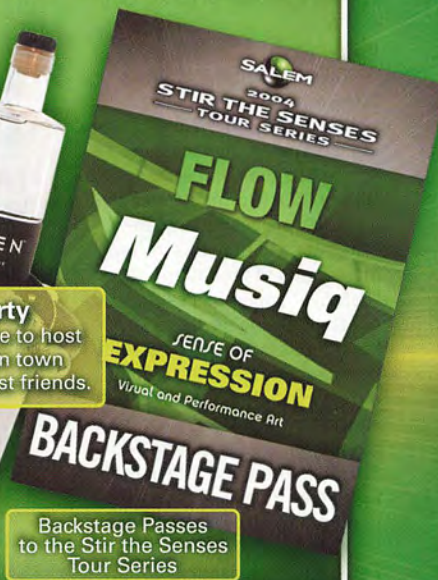


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CRIME CONTINUED

6 Which one of these fracas never actually occurred?

A 2003: Aaron Carter accuses his mother of taking more than \$100,000 of his money without permission

B 1987: An audience member sues the Beastie Boys for damages after their giant inflatable-penis prop collapses on top of her during a show in Glasgow, Scotland

C 2003: A stalker sues Britney Spears for emotional distress after one of her bodyguards allegedly brandishes a gun at him

D 2002: Freddie Mercury's former partner sues a London nursery for accidentally killing the late singer's collection of 84 koi carp

ANSWER: B

7 Take the number of times Jack White was accused of hitting Von Bondies singer Jason Stollsteimer in the face in 2003. Add to this the number of people Mötley Crüe frontman Vince Neil has killed via vehicular manslaughter. Multiply this by how many years of probation Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes was sentenced to after burning down her boyfriend's home in 1994. Add the number of people stabbed during a brawl at a 1999 R. Kelly concert in Miami. Subtract the number of bullets that hit Tupac Shakur in the 1996 attack that killed him. Finally, subtract the number of dead actresses who were discovered at Phil Spector's Los Angeles mansion in 2003. What figure are you left with?

ANSWER: 7 + 1 + 5 + 8 - 4 - 1 = 43



The Von Bondies' Jason Stollsteimer absolutely hates his passport photo.



1 DAVID CROSBY



3 SID VICIOUS

Study these mug shots. What charges were being brought?

A Second-degree murder

B Four counts of misdemeanor assault, one count of property damage

C Public drunkenness, carrying a pistol

D Felonious possession of cocaine, illegal possession of a handgun

E Accomplice to murder

ANSWERS: 1-D; 2-B; 3-A; 4-A; 5-C



4 SNOOP DOGG



2 AXEL ROSE



5 JERRY LEE LEWIS

9 Accurately mark on this diagram the following:

A Where Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain was charged with hitting a parking attendant with his Jaguar after a disagreement over a VIP parking permit at the Jones Beach Theater in Long Island, New York, in 2003

B Where former Meat Puppets bassist Cris Kirkwood was shot after tussling with a security guard in a Phoenix post office in 2003

C Where Marilyn Manson rubbed his groin against a security guard during a 2001 performance in Detroit

D Where the drunk and suicidal girlfriend of the Geto Boys' Bushwick Bill shot him — after he dared her to — in 1991

E What the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Anthony Kiedis showed to a female concertgoer, resulting in charges of indecent exposure and sexual battery, after a 1989 RHCP show in Virginia

ANSWERS: A-LEGS; B-ABDOMEN; C-HEAD; D-RIGHT EYE; E-PEE-PEE



10 Examine these objects closely.

In 1999, Universal Records executive Steve Stoute accused P. Diddy and his two bodyguards of beating him with three of the items shown. Which one was *not* allegedly wielded to settle the beef?



A A CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE



B AN OFFICE CHAIR

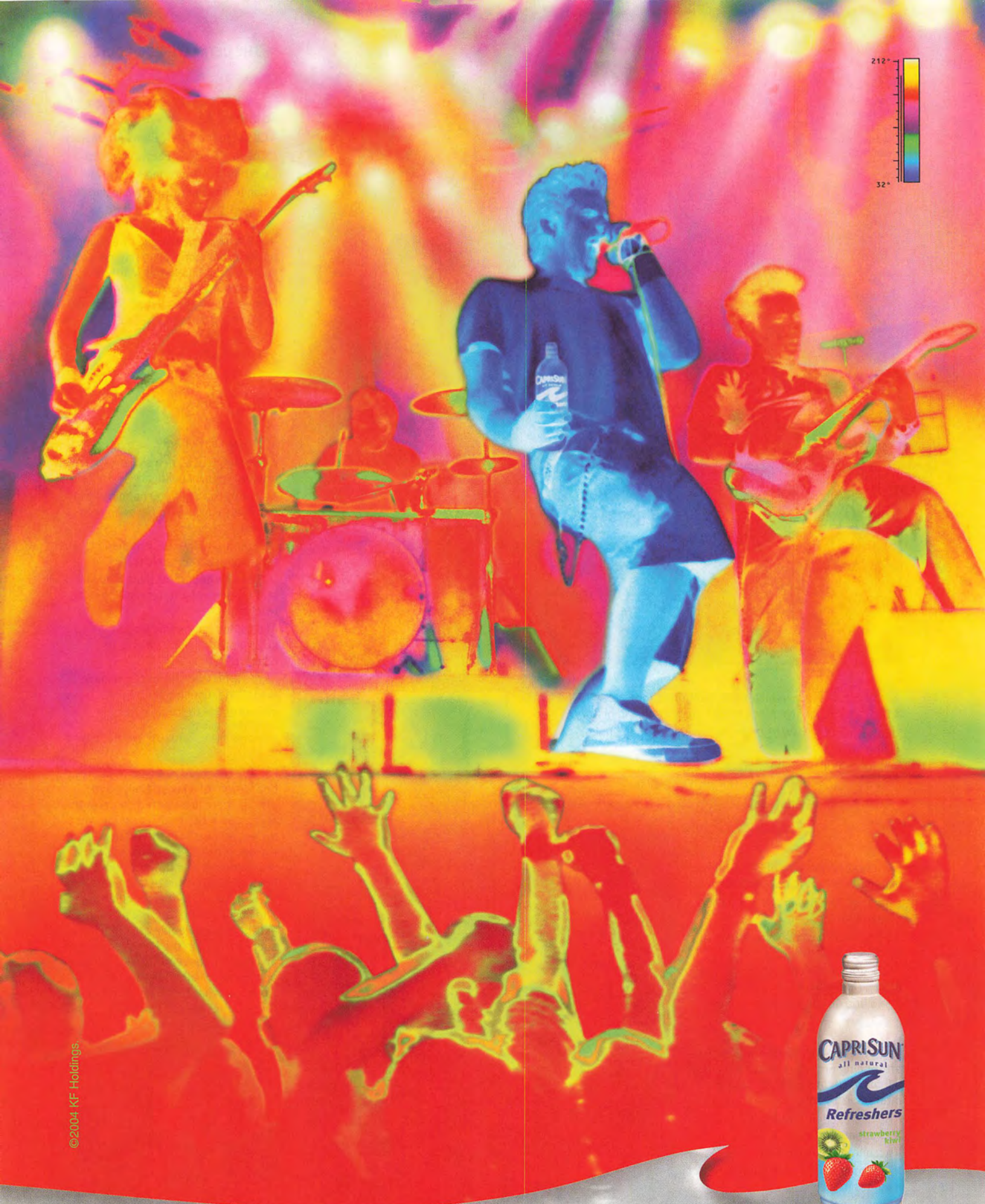


C A COFFEE MUG



D A PHONE

ANSWER: C



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"No, Gene Simmons, we can't graft two penises onto your head."

CASHING IN!

MONEY

KNOW MUCH ABOUT MUSICIANS' ABILITY TO PISS AWAY THE CASH YOU GIVE THEM? LET'S FIND OUT!

1 Which of these vehicles was auctioned for \$2.229 million, making it the most expensive piece of pop memorabilia in history?

- A Suge Knight's BMW 750, the car in which Tupac Shakur was shot in 1996
- B John Lennon's 1965 Phantom V Rolls-Royce
- C Korn guitarist Munky's speedboat, *The Bruiser*
- D Keith Richards's vintage Nazi staff car

ANSWER: B



★ THE ULTIMATE ROCK QUIZ

- 4** What does the Wu-Tang Clan acronym C.R.E.A.M. stand for?
- A Cappadonna Rarely Earns Any Money
 - B Cheddar Rocking Ears and Minds
 - C Cash Rules Everything Around Me
 - D Can Really Easily Afford Mansions

ANSWER: C

5 Which of these dead musicians made approximately \$9 million last year, placing him above Marilyn Monroe but below Tupac Shakur in Forbes.com's 2003 list of deceased celebrity earners?

- A Bob Marley
- B Elvis Presley
- C Jimi Hendrix
- D Kurt Cobain

ANSWER: A

6 Who said what?

- A "When you're as rich as I am, you don't have to be political."
- B "Money can't buy you happiness, but it can buy you a yacht big enough to pull up alongside it."
- C "'You can't buy love with money': Only a poor person says that."
- D "The only important thing is to sell and make money. It has nothing to do with talent."
- E "If I didn't have some kind of education, I wouldn't be able to count my money."
- F "You aren't wealthy until you have something money can't buy."

A-STING; B-DAVID LEE ROTH; C-GENE SIMMONS; D-GEORGE HARRISON; E-MISSY ELLIOTT; F-GARTH BROOKS

7 It's the mid-'70s. You're in the boardroom of a lavish Hollywood office. There is a stuffed camel in the foyer, and a secretary is asking what drugs you need. On the table is a receipt for a life-size cake of Donna Summer that was flown to New York lying across two first-class seats and then met by a freezer ambulance. The boss, Neil Bogart, is away — his act the Village People are enjoying success with "In the Navy," so he is at an industry convention dressed as an admiral. Kiss's Paul Stanley pops in to say hi. What ruinously extravagant record label are you visiting?

ANSWER: CASABLANCA RECORDS



The Village People: "So it's not a fancy dress party?"

2 Identify the item of Elton John expenditure that is not genuine:

- A \$200,000 on flowers over the course of 20 months
- B \$80,000 on a Louis XIV costume for his fiftieth birthday
- C \$12,000 on a ring that says FUCK YOU in diamonds
- D \$34,000 on a realistic hair weave

ANSWER: D

3 What was Willie Nelson's excuse after being hit with a \$16.7 million bill for back taxes, penalties and interest in 1990?

- A He hadn't been sent the appropriate forms
- B Accountants misled him
- C He'd made the mistake of thinking of it as "his money"
- D Everything's a blur since that shipment of hydro in 1971

ANSWER: B

Elton John: Gay, we're saying.



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Lou Reed: "Life is a cabaret, old chum...."



THE ULTIMATE ROCK QUIZ

5 By 1999, Garth Brooks had grown weary of his bland but successful existence as a country-music monolith. What did he then do?

- A** Retired to his emu ranch outside Cheyenne, Wyoming
- B** Paid for his special friend, Timmy, to have a sex-change operation, then moved to Greenwich Village in New York, where he opened a cowboy emporium
- C** Bought a wig and pretended to be an Australian post-punker named Chris Gaines; made a flop album of INXS-style rock
- D** Wrote his autobiography, *Wherever I Lay My Hat*

ANSWER: C

6 How did rock weirdo and former electroshock-therapy victim Lou Reed justify his double album of unlistenable feedback, *Metal Machine Music*, to disappointed fans in 1975?

- A** "I make music for myself. If other people like it, that's a bonus."
- B** "The kids can go eat rat shit."
- C** "Now you know what electroshock feels like."
- D** "Just be glad it's not a rock musical based on the work of Edgar Allan Poe."

ANSWER: B

7 In 1982, Texas acid-rock loon Roky Erickson signed an affidavit to the effect that his body was possessed by which of the following?

- A** A martian
- B** The devil
- C** *Sesame Street*'s Mr. Snuffleupagus
- D** Whoopi Goldberg

ANSWER: A

8 Place Russell Jones's unhinged soubriquets in the order he adopted them:

- Ol' Dirty Bastard
- Osiris
- Big Baby Jesus
- Dirt Dogg
- Dirt McGirt

ANSWER: THIS IS THE CORRECT ORDER.

9 It's time for everyone's favorite game: rock-star *Jeopardy!* What question is this the answer to?

Sniffing a dead crow to induce projectile vomiting.

ANSWER: WHAT IS THE PRESHOW WARMUP ROUTINE OF SLIPKNOT'S SHAWN CRAWHAN?

MADNESS

THERE'S "CRAZY LIKE A FOX." AND THEN THERE'S "CRAZY LIKE OL' DIRTY BASTARD." CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

1 Which of these is *not* a genuine musical instruction from Captain Beefheart to a long-suffering guitarist?

- A** "Play that like a smoky yellow room."
- B** "Hit that long, lunar note, and let it float."
- C** "That's right, Mascara Snake: fast and bulbous!"

D "You've got eight bars. It's in D. Surprise me."

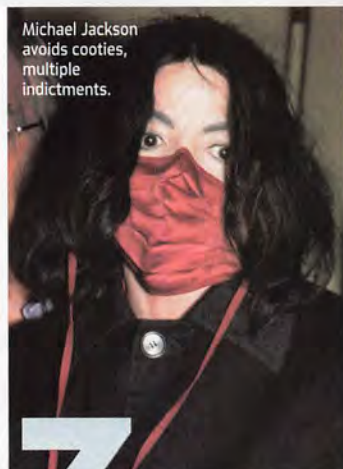
ANSWER: D

2 Which rock legend moved into his garage, painted the windows black and installed floodlights outside to deter all of his imagined enemies? Delirious, he would sometimes tell his children stories about his stints as a Marine and a deputy sheriff, though he'd been neither, and would often be discovered by police wandering country lanes at night, unable to remember how he got there. He passed away in Harlingen, Texas, on February 9, 1981.

- A** Richie Valens
- B** Bill Haley
- C** Bobby Vee
- D** Gene Vincent

ANSWER: B

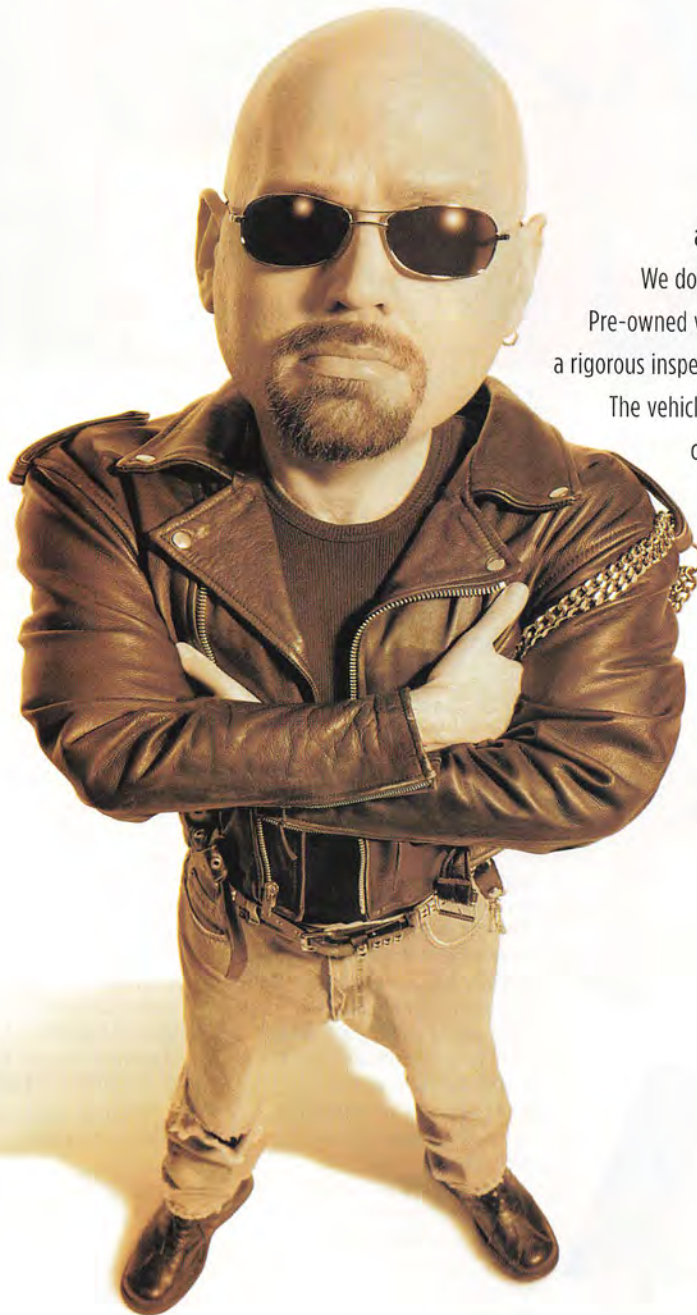
Michael Jackson avoids cooties, multiple indictments.



Lead the spiritually promiscuous rock star to his or her in-no-way-bogus guru:



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YEAH, BABY!

SEX

PREPARE TO GET DOWN AND DIRTY WITH OUR, AHM, HARDEST ROUND OF QUESTIONS SO FAR

1 In their early days partying on the Sunset Strip, Mötley Crüe would frequently have no-strings sex with women who weren't their girlfriends. Before going home to their partners, into what would they insert their genitalia to mask the smell of their indiscretion?

- A Nikki Sixx
- B An egg burrito
- C A glass of Jack Daniel's
- D A soapy washcloth

ANSWER: B

2 Which of these was a major turn-on for Elvis Presley during his declining years?

- A Being told, "You're the colonel!" during sexual intercourse
- B Watching nubile teenagers wrestling in white panties
- C Dressing

in a big adult diaper

and being fed burgers by a matronly hooker
D Standing naked but for a pair of blue suede shoes and spanking girls for deliberately stepping on them

ANSWER: B

3 In 2001, former Duran Duran guitarist Warren Cuccurullo marketed a signature dildo that was made from a mold of his own erect penis. What was it called, what was one of its key selling points and how long was it?

- A The Whammy Bar, had a realistic flesh tone, 9 inches
- B The Fender Bender, had a fully adjustable shaft, went up to 11 inches
- C The Rock Rod, featured a robust scrotum, 6 inches
- D The Soloist, fit discreetly into a handbag, 5 inches

ANSWER: C



But is Mötley Crüe's Vince Neil really happy?

4 "I'm just an old slag who gets up every morning, scratches his head and wonders what he wants to fuck." Who said this?

- A Rob Halford
- B Jimmy Page
- C Freddie Mercury
- D Tony Bennett

ANSWER: C

Sadly, Freddie Mercury's *Police Academy* audition failed.



A TIFFANY



B LATOJA JACKSON



C NANCY SINATRA

Match the celebrity featured on these covers of *Playboy* with her justification for appearing in the magazine:

- 1 "I just felt that being 42 years old and not being size zero and not being blonde, that it could be a really positive statement for women."
- 2 "It really was an avenue for me to break out of the young mall-queen image."
- 3 "Actually, it was my management. It's nothing that I would have done on my own."
- 4 "I needed a cheap publicity stunt — cheap meaning it wouldn't cost me anything."

ANSWERS: A-2; B-3; C-4; D-1



D BELINDA CARLISLE

6 According to the kiss-and-tell book *You'll Never Make Love in This Town Again*, which of these lines did a prostitute say to which famous musician during sexual congress with her and two friends?

- A "Check me into the Hotel California!" to Don Henley
- B "Enter me, sandman!" to Metallica's James Hetfield
- C "Yeah, boyeeeeee!" to Public Enemy's Flavor Flav
- D "Mmm-bop! Don't stop!" to the drummer from Hanson

ANSWER: A

7 The "Donna's Domain" section of metal-sludge.com features women who claim to have slept with musicians recounting their alleged experiences. Can you guess which rocker is being dissed?

- A "Might growl during sex. Also drunk a lot."

ROCK METAL

- B "Constantly talks. Also, he's losing his hair."

LARS ULRICH, METALLICA

- C "Below-average penis. Rarely gives oral."

DEREK WHIBLEY, SUM 41

- D "A quick shooter."

DUFF MCKAGAN, GUNS N' ROSES

- E "The bottom line is that his cock is like him: short."

GLENN DANZIG

- F "Snores like a bastard."

LALON WITHERSPOON, SEVENSTUD

- G "Demands you stay loyal to him while he can go get other pussy."

BRETT MICHAELS, POISON



Ralph Dominguez/Globe Photos (Neil), Neal Preston/Reena Ltd. (Mercury), Bob Gruen/Surf File (Presley), Alphonse Jeymonde (Gall-Iles, 4), Ross Perrow/Reena Ltd. (1001)



VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

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1 Who is it?

STAR A still samples the packets of drugs that fans throw onstage addressed to him. "Some of it's pretty good," he says. "We toss away the crap, you know? The guys will pick it up, and it gets sent back to my room. Sometimes I won't open them for days now. It's usually weed." Who is Star A?

KEITH RICHARDS

STAR B was so fond of cocaine that his personal Christmas card read "Everybody needs a little snow at Christmas" alongside a picture of him sniffing away. Who is Star B?

PHILIP SPECTOR

STAR C invited his entire family, including his grandmother, to his Hollywood mansion for Los Angeles's "Star C Week" in 1975. In front of them, he consumed an entire bottle of Valium and jumped into his swimming pool shouting "I'm going to die!" Who is Star C?

JOHN NOTIS

2 Match the drug to the star's description of its effects:

- A** Klonopin, a tranquilizer
- B** Ayahuasca, a South American hallucinogen
- C** Marijuana
- D** DMT

1 Tori Amos: "I've been in a room with a woman [on it] who was literally trying to bite her own arm off."

2 Willie Nelson: "It's like sex. If I don't do it every day, I get a headache."

3 Iggy Pop: "I saw a gigantic holographic Buddha — correct in every way!"

4 Stevie Nicks: "My hair turned gray. My skin molted."

ANSWERS: A-4; B-1; C-2; D-3

3 Keith Richards once owned a boat named . . .

- A** The HMS Smack
- B** The Cocaine
- C** The Mandrax
- D** The Purple Heart

ANSWER: C

4 Which of the following items did Happy Mondays singer Shaun Ryder (left) swap for crack when recording in Barbados?

- A** His watch
- B** The studio coffee machine
- C** The studio sofa
- D** All of the clothes he was wearing

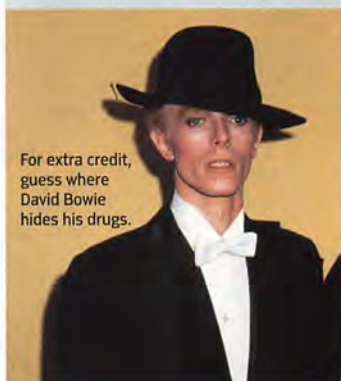
ANSWER: C AND D

Iggy Pop: "At least there's no photographer around. . . . D'oh!"

THE HIGH LIFE!

DRUGS

JUST SAY YES TO THIS FINAL, NARCOTICALLY ORIENTED CLUSTER OF CONJUDRUMS



For extra credit, guess where David Bowie hides his drugs.



6 Which of these two pictures of the Wu-Tang Clan's Ol' Dirty Bastard was taken after he went on the run from drug rehab in 2000, vowing that he would survive on "birdseed and shit"?

ANSWER: THE FAT ONE. THE WU-TANG CLAN RAPPER WAS ARRESTED IN A McDONALD'S PARKING LOT IN SOUTH PHILADELPHIA.

5 True or false?

- A** "Fleetwood Mac" is Cockney rhyming slang for heroin.
- B** After taking a hit off a joint for the first time, the Beatles' Paul McCartney immediately instructed his road manager to "write down everything I say from now on."
- C** At the height of his cocaine use in the '70s, David Bowie's weight fell to 90 pounds, and he survived on red and green peppers and milk.
- D** Steven Tyler of Aerosmith once injected Shake n' Bake, mistaking it for heroin.

ANSWERS: A: FALSE. THE BAND IS NAMED AFTER MIKE FLEETWOOD AND JOHN MCVIE. B: TRUE. C: TRUE. D: FALSE.



Keith Richards: Well, at least he's eating.

7 Which of these drugs are real and which are not?

- A** Gorilla biscuits
- B** Love Boat
- C** Sherm
- D** Brainscratch

ANSWERS: A: REAL. A TERM FOR PCP. B: REAL. A MIXTURE OF MARIJUANA AND PCP ON THE '80s GO-GO SCENE. C: REAL. CIGARETTE DIIPPED IN LIQUID PCP, AS MENTIONED IN "GET DOWN" BY NAS. D: FAKE. FROM THE ONION STORY "CIA REVEALS NEW GHETTO DRUGS FOR '98."

8 Which of these deaths was caused by a drug overdose?

A Layne Staley of Alice In Chains (right), found dead in his Seattle apartment in 2002

B Chet Baker, long-time heroin addict, died in 1988

C Toto drummer Jeff Porcaro, died in 1992

D Shannon Hoon of Blind Melon, found dead on his tour bus in 1995



ANSWERS: A: YES. HEROIN AND COCAINE INTOXICATION. B: NO. HAD BEEN TAKING HEROIN AND COCAINE BUT DIED FALLING OUT OF A HOTEL WINDOW. C: NO. BELIEVED TO HAVE DIED OF A HEART ATTACK AFTER SPRINKLING TOO MUCH WEED KILLER ON HIS LAWN. D: YES. COCAINE OVERDOSE.

THE RESULTS!

One point for each correct answer. If you scored . . .

26-41 CONGRATULATIONS!

You have an expert knowledge of felonious activity, financial excess, lunacy and drug abuse. You are either a former member of Mötley Crüe or a very successful Hollywood attorney.

16-25 GOOD.

You have a firm grasp of the basics of rock & roll. Keep studying; one day you might make it as a musician. Or you might be arrested for urinating in public.

0-15 OH, DEAR.

Your ignorance of the seamy side of rock & roll is inexcusable. You may live in a monastery. And you definitely need to practice reading upside-down. [BLENDER]



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KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

The Drive-By Truckers have overcome rejection, divorces, blackouts, death, and onstage fistfights. But can the Southern rockers survive success? *Blender* puts its affairs in order and climbs aboard the DBT tour bus to find out

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY C. TAYLOR CROTHERS

WELCOME TO THE hot fuckin' South!" declares a flush-faced Patterson Hood as *Blender* climbs onto the Drive-By Truckers' tour van for the first time. "This is why we're so ornery."

The band's frontman is right about the temperature. On this late June afternoon, the outdoor Riverbend Festival in Chattanooga, Tennessee, is sweltering. And the temperature is at least 10 degrees higher inside the Truckers' bus, a decrepit, AC-free reminder that the Southern quintet don't have much in the way of what the 40-year-old Hood describes as "rock-star money."

But Hood is only joking about their orneriness. Within minutes of our arrival, the Truckers have generously offered *Blender* a variety of intoxicants, including a grass-filled pipe, a can of Pabst and a sip from the biggest bottle of Jack Daniel's we have ever seen.

"We actually buy it in barrels," jokes the band's drummer, Brad "Easy-B" Morgan, 33, a man with the look and mild demeanor of a biochemist. "We just put it in those bottles to carry around."

Fact is, the Truckers could not be

more convivial company, particularly for a band whose excellent latest album, *The Dirty South*, tackles such bleak topics as cancer, World War II and the economic vagaries visited upon the South during the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

"I turned on the news a week after Reagan died and the fucker was still on the TV," spits Mike Cooley, Hood's bandmate and friend of almost 20 years. "It shouldn't have come as any surprise, though. The people who got rich enough to run that shit did so while he was in power. I'm only surprised they didn't just roll on up to his coffin and suck his dick."

WITHIN MINUTES OF OUR ARRIVAL, THE TRUCKERS HAVE OFFERED BLENDER A VARIETY OF INTOXICANTS.

Another of the band's three singer-songwriters, the whip-thin 38-year-old Cooley looks, swears and certainly drinks like a character straight out of HBO's Western series *Deadwood* (a favorite show of his). Like the rest of the Truckers, he sneers at attempts to label the band's music as "Southern rock" or "alt-country," just as he "resents" *Blender*'s description of the Truckers' political views as "liberal." But later, when a friend of the band says that she knows some Republican-supporting corporate types who are fans, Cooley will admit that he'd like to "drag the fuckers behind our truck."

Taking a glug of Jack Daniel's, Hood tells *Blender* that while the band's last album, 2003's *Decoration Day*, was about people having to live with the choices they've made, *The Dirty South* is about people who have "no choice at all." But even this he says with a shit-eating grin plastered over his face.

"We weren't so cheery a couple of years ago," Hood says. "If you'd hung out with us back then, you'd have been on the phone to your editor saying, 'Get me out of here — these guys are fucking crazy and they're going to kill each other!'"

"And you'd have said that I hadn't →



Above: Drive-By Truckers rest up, from left: Shonna Isbell, Brad Morgan, Patterson Hood, Mike Cooley (standing), Jason Isbell; all other images playing live at Fitzgerald's, Chicago, July 3, 2004.





Drive-By Truckers' pool party left something to be desired.

been sober in three days," Cooley says with a dark chuckle. "Or worn any fucking clothes."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THERE AREN'T MANY people who can make dropping acid at a Blue Öyster Cult show seem like a mythic adventure of Arthurian proportions. But Patterson Hood is one of them. He does so tonight toward the end of the band's set in the course of "Let There Be Rock," one of the standout tracks on the Truckers' 2001 breakthrough album, *Southern Rock Opera*. In the song, Hood recalls that although he never saw Lynyrd Skynyrd before the 1977 plane crash that killed three of them, he did see Blue Öyster Cult and Molly Hatchet and AC/DC ("with Bon Scott singing 'Let there be raaaaaaaawk!'").

The fact that what sounds like a rather mundane litany of gig-going achieves mythic proportions is partly due to the song's arrangement. Broadly

speaking, the tunes penned by Cooley and the band's third singer-songwriter, guitarist Jason Isbell, lean towards '70s-era Stones and honky-tonk, respectively, while those written by Hood, such as "Let There Be Rock," often sound like an aural summation of rock history, with nods to heavy metal, Southern rock, punk and the guitar howls of Neil Young (one of Hood's idols). But what really makes the track epic is Hood's heartfelt, Jack-soaked conviction that getting fucked up at a BÖC show — "I thought them lasers were a spider chasing me," he sings — is every bit as deserving of mythic presentation as free birds and Southern men.

The Drive-By Truckers love myths —

GUITARIST MIKE COOLEY LOOKS, SWEARS AND DRINKS LIKE A CHARACTER FROM DEADWOOD.

and history in general. In many ways, they're the spiritual successors to the Band, who also weaved tallish tales about bygone days and who, significantly, get a shout-out on *The Dirty South*, thanks to the Isbell-penned suicide lament "Danko/Manuel."

Hood's own obsession with history, particularly the history of music, is unsurprising. His father is David Hood, former bassist with legendary studio session musicians the Swampers, whom Lynyrd Skynyrd name-checked on "Sweet Home Alabama" ("Now Muscle Shoals has got the Swampers . . .").

"Pat's upbringing was . . . different," David Hood tells *Blender* a couple of days later. "I was only 20 when

Pat was born. My wife and I weren't really hippies, but we embraced that culture and some of the drugs and playing around and having a good time."

Blender tells Hood *père* that his son remembers a lot of "for sale" signs going up whenever they moved into a new neighborhood.

"He may be elaborating a little bit there," says the 60-year-old with a laugh. "Pat's a born storyteller! Some of the stuff that he writes, I'll think, 'Where the hell did he get that?' But most of it is based on some bit of fact."

Over time, the elder Hood recorded hits with, among many others, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Traffic and Willie Nelson, becoming friends with many along the way. Naturally, young Patterson desperately wanted to hang out with these stars, too. But his father didn't think children had any place in the recording studio, so he rarely got the chance. Patterson's father also believed that his son, who had been writing →



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songs since the third grade, should give up his dream of being a musician.

"He just thought he was really lucky and that lightning wasn't going to strike twice," Patterson says.

David Hood also thought his son was simply not good enough to make a living with music.

"I was very blunt about it," he says. "I said, 'You can't tune your guitar and you can't sing in key.' Luckily, he just ignored me. I'm proud of him."

Hood rebelled against his father by getting into punk, listening to the Clash and other acts that his father called "chocolate vomits."

"The funny thing is that my dad just did a session with Frank Black," Hood says. "He rang me up and said, 'Wasn't he in one of those of those 'chocolate vomits'? I was, like, 'Yeah, dad, they're called the Pixies.'"

Hood's voracious appetite for new music didn't stop with punk. Indeed, while the Truckers may obsessively sing about the past, they are far from stuck in it. As we make the three-hour drive from Chattanooga to Birmingham, Alabama, where the band is due to play another festival tomorrow night, Kanye West's *The College Dropout* plays on the bus's stereo — when it's working — and Hood tells *Blender* that rap is the only music that everyone in the band can listen to "without an argument." The album name *The Dirty South* is itself a nod to their rap counterparts, as was that of their 1998 debut, *Gangstabilly*. Hood was even so inspired by Outkast releasing two singles at the same time that he tried to convince his record company to release three off *The Dirty South* — one each from himself, Cooley and Isbell. He was told that Outkast were "different."

"I said, 'Maybe we should be different, too,'" Hood says. "Because they're selling more fuckin' records than us."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IT IS OFTEN SAID that one of Bill Clinton's greatest strengths was making whomever he talked to feel important and valued. Patterson Hood has a similar gift. He says his head is full of all sorts of obscure details that occupy the place where most people keep the information necessary to "make a proper living." Many of those facts seem to relate to the many visitors — friends, family members, marijuana-bearing ne'er-do-wells — he routinely welcomes onto the bus, most of whom he quizzes in some detail about their family or mutual friends.

Of course, Hood's upbeat vibe may also be in part attributable to the fact that the Truckers' star is most definitely



FIVE SONGS FOR OUR NEXT PRESIDENT

As chosen by Patterson Hood, damn angry citizen and lead singer of Drive-By Truckers



1 TOM T. HALL "MAMA BAKE A PIE (DADDY KILL A CHICKEN)"

BLENDER SAYS Heart-rending tale of a returning, crippled Vietnam vet.

HOOD SAYS "Not so much a protest as a reminder of the lives that go on after all the speeches are over."

2 AC/DC "(YOU SHOOK ME) ALL NIGHT LONG"

BLENDER SAYS The Australian rockers pay salacious tribute to doing the nasty

HOOD SAYS "Drinking beer and chasing girls — or boys, if you prefer — is what healthy teenagers do, and before we interrupt that by sending them off to foreign counties, we'd better make sure it's worth it."

3 THE FLAMING LIPS "WAITIN' FOR A SUPERMAN"

BLENDER SAYS Wayne Coyne obliquely reflects on his father's death.

HOOD SAYS "This song came out in 1999, but no song has summed up the emotional toll of 9/11 as well as this."

4 KANYE WEST "WE DON'T CARE"

BLENDER SAYS A wry shout-out to drug dealers and other industrious 'hood denizens.

HOOD SAYS "Anyone who's leading the free world has to accept that diversity is one of the best things about a free society."

5 SAM THE SHAM AND THE PHAROHS "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD"

BLENDER SAYS Novelty hit that finds the Big Bad Wolf making suggestive overtones to his cape-clad prey.

HOOD SAYS "My new bride and I danced to this one at our wedding, and while I don't need a mental image of you chasing the missus around the Oval Office with a can of whipped cream in your hand, I would certainly sleep much easier knowing that our president was getting a little from time to time."

ascendant. *Southern Rock Opera* turned up on innumerable best-of-year lists in 2001, and its follow-up, *Decoration Day*, sold a respectable 60,000 copies.

This success came just in the nick of time. When they started recording *Southern Rock Opera*, Hood and Cooley had been playing together for over a decade, first in a proto-grunge band called Adam's House Cat and then, for three albums, as the Drive-By Truckers. Hood admits that *Southern Rock Opera*, a concept album about Lynyrd Skynyrd and a more or less fictional Truckers-type outfit called Betamax Guillotine, was the band's last throw of the dice. Recorded in 2000, the record was rejected by 60 labels, including companies so small Patterson says he could now buy them — "and I still ain't making shit!"

Eventually the band decided to release *Southern Rock Opera* itself, borrowing money from friends with the promise, ultimately fulfilled, of paying everyone back with 15 percent interest. The many ecstatic reviews attracted a distribution deal from the respected Lost Highway label, but by then the Truckers were well into an 18-month tour that tested the patience of their better halves to, and in most cases beyond, the breaking point.

"Only Cooley's wife stuck with him, which is pretty heroic, in my opinion," recalls Hood, whose marriage, his second, was just one casualty of the *Southern Rock Opera* project. At the time he told interviewers that the band's next CD would be called *How to Really Fuck Up Your Life While Making a Rock Record*.

Instead, Hood recorded a solo album, the recently released *Killers and Stars*, a task which kept him from doing "really →



DBT rock out, resolve cockroach problem.

SOUTHERN ROCK OPERA WAS REJECTED BY 60 LABELS, SO THEY RELEASED IT THEMSELVES.

stupid” stuff, while Cooley . . . well, Cooley drank. A lot. He says all that he can remember about one show he played was that there can’t have been more than 12 people in the audience because “I only saw 24.”

“If you were at the show that night, you’ve got every right to think that I’m a violent-ass fucking drunk,” Cooley says as the bus pulls into Birmingham. “Man, I was sick of being in this band. Things got nasty. Things got . . . bloody.”

EARLY THE NEXT afternoon, the band reconvenes to have its photograph taken outside the Nick, which drummer Brad Morgan tells *Blender* is “the greatest shithole bar in the country.”

“This parking lot has a death count,” says Cooley with a drawl, recounting how some years back, the day before the Truckers played a show here, a guy got fatally shot pretty much where your writer is standing.

Given the band’s print-the-legend ethos, *Blender* isn’t entirely surprised later when we ask the Nick’s bartender about the incident. “Sounds like bullshit to me,” he says, “although some pretty shady shit has gone on out there.”

But there’s no argument about the fact that death is a principal lyrical pre-occupation of the band. More than half of the songs on *The Dirty South* feature someone dying, usually in an ugly or painful fashion.

The Grim Reaper has left his mark on the band in real life too. The original lineup was supposed to include a multi-instrumentalist named Chris Quillen, but he died in a car crash two weeks before their first recording session.

“He played in Adam’s House Cat” says Hood. “The guy he replaced...he’s dead as well.”

“One of my earliest memories is being taken to a rodeo by my dad and seeing someone get killed,” Isbell says. “I was like, ‘Gee, thanks for that, Dad!’”

At 25, Isbell is almost young enough to be Hood’s son, but Hood describes him as an “old soul.” Isbell joined the band during their *Southern Rock Opera* tour from hell, and his arrival is generally agreed to have marked a turning point in the band’s morale. Morgan says that before Isbell came aboard, everyone was sick to death of being on tour, of waking up on some friend-of-a-friend’s floor with “dogs licking our faces and cats jumping on our balls.” Afterward, all of that still happened, but Isbell’s youthful enthusiasm helped the rest of the band remember that, in Hood’s words, the Truckers are “very fucking lucky to have this job.”



DBT as Adam's House Cat, circa 1990: Weren't they cute?



Members of rock group Skynyrd killed in the crash were: Lead singer Donnie Van Zant (third from right, standing), guitarists Steve Gaines (second from right, standing), and Gaines' sister vocalist Cassie Gaines (bottom right).

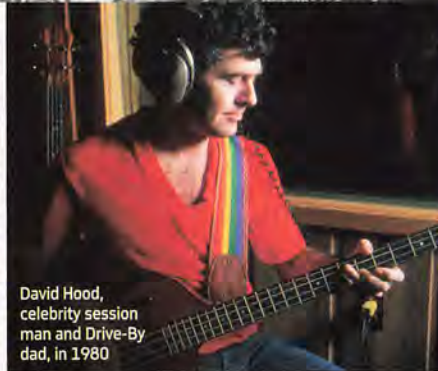
Air crash kills 3 rock stars

McCOY, Mike, (AP) - Three members of the band Skynyrd were killed in a plane crash Sunday.

Another breath of fresh air was the arrival last year of bassist Shonna Tucker. Hood first heard about Tucker through — who else? — his father, but she had played with Isbell since they were teenagers. Shortly after Isbell joined the Truckers, he and Tucker began stepping out, and following Tucker’s enlistment into the group, they got married — a rare case of the band actually bringing a couple together.

The bassist, 26, seems to have had no trouble fitting into this all-male, at times less than sanitary, enclave. At one point on the tour bus, when *Blender* apologizes for wearing a sweat-stained T-shirt, she

MORE THAN HALF THE SONGS FEATURE SOMEONE DYING, USUALLY IN AN UGLY OR PAINFUL FASHION.



David Hood, celebrity session man and Drive-By dad, in 1980

← The New York Post reports the Skynyrd crash, 1977

tells us not to worry: “No one here ever smells good.”

The Isbells aren’t the band’s only Just Marrieds. Hood recently wed his third wife and says he’s learned his lessons about combining marriage with playing in a band. Yet as the group’s schedule remains as hectic as ever — tonight they’ll travel overnight to Kansas, with Hood and Morgan then flying on to New York for some acoustic shows — *Blender* isn’t quite sure what those lessons are.

“We’re still doing a ridiculous amount of dates,” Hood agrees. “But now we can fly our wives out in the nick of time. I’ve fucked up two marriages — I don’t intend to fuck up a third.”

Before we take our leave, we can’t help but point out that Hood’s amiably cantankerous relationship with Cooley has lasted much longer than any of his marriages.

“Yeah,” he says. “And I hope we’ll always play together, whether it’s in this band or not.”

“We’ll be in our wheelchairs talking about the good old days,” Cooley deadpans. “And they won’t even have been good old days.” [BLENDER]

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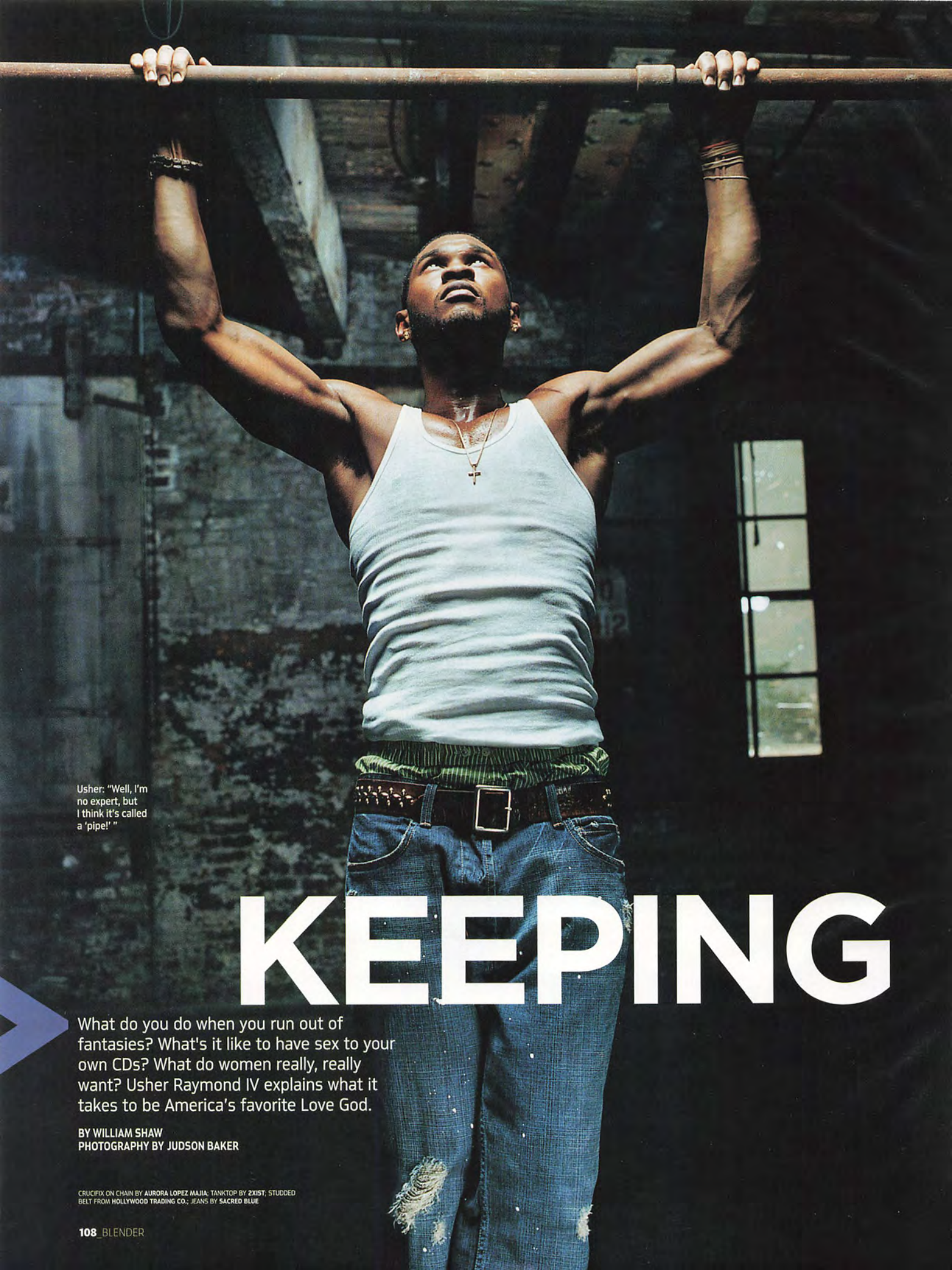
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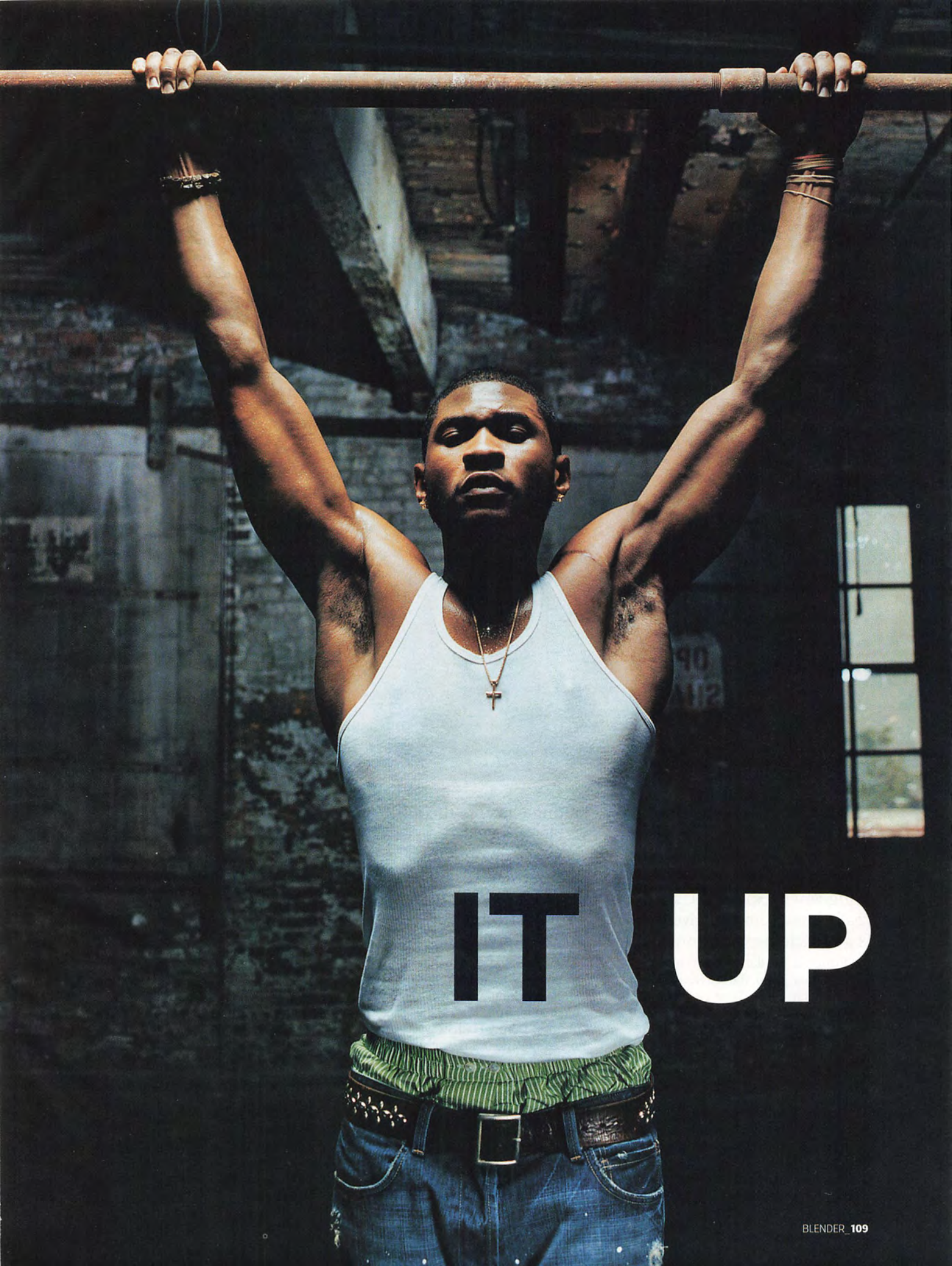
Usher: "Well, I'm no expert, but I think it's called a 'pipe!' "

KEEPING

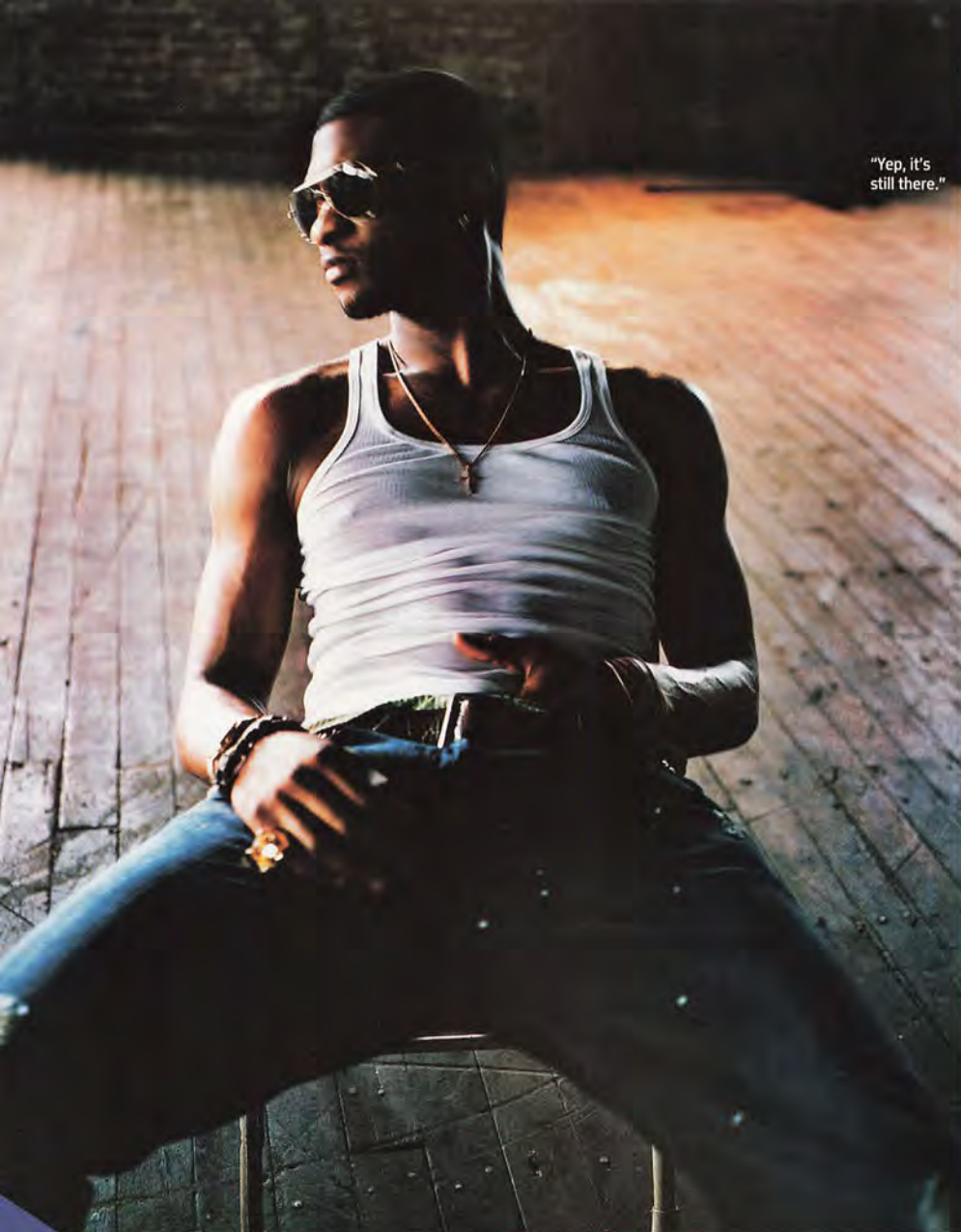
What do you do when you run out of fantasies? What's it like to have sex to your own CDs? What do women really, really want? Usher Raymond IV explains what it takes to be America's favorite Love God.

BY WILLIAM SHAW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUDSON BAKER

CRUCIFIX ON CHAIN BY AURORA LOPEZ MAJIA; TANKTOP BY 2XIST; STUDDED BELT FROM HOLLYWOOD TRADING CO.; JEANS BY SACRED BLUE



IT UP



"Yep, it's still there."

USHER RAYMOND is distributing Gucci to the girls. A neat black bag containing a silver bracelet or necklace to each. It's a thank-you to his dancers for the work they do on tour. The girls unwrap the gifts, open-mouthed, suitably awed. It's the sort of thing you'd expect of Usher. He looks exactly like a man who really knows how to give jewelry to a girl. Keeping women happy is a muscle he works on, along with those rippling abs.

Flattered, the dancers start to joke: Usher's their pimp, they're his girls. "I'll be your bitch, Usher," one gushes.

Usher just smiles that little smile. "I think," he says quietly, "I'll be leaving now." And he moves to the back of the tour bus, leaving the ladies fingering their baubles.

Fact: Usher is a bona fide Love God.

Usher's third album, *8701*, confirmed that he had made the transition from a child prodigy, nurtured by LA Reid and Babyface, Jermaine Dupri and Puffy Combs, into a sultry adult star.

His fourth, *Confessions*, takes the next

big step. Selling more than a million copies in its first week, it put him right into the tradition of great G-spot-hitting soul singers, from Marvin Gaye, Luther Vandross, Donny Hathaway, Al Green and Teddy Pendergrass right through to our somewhat tarnished modern-day soul heroes Bobby Brown and R. Kelly.

CONFESSIONS PUT USHER INTO THE TRADITION OF G-SPOT-HITTING SOUL SINGERS.

Confessions is more than the sensitive-guy grind of "Burn" or the groin-thrusting soul of "Yeah!" Great soul does male anguish, and the title tracks, "Confessions" and "Confessions Part II," take you straight to that darker place. Usher suddenly has depth. In those two tracks, he tells the tale of a young man who cheats on his girl and gets her pregnant. The songs are about a wayward man attempting to redeem himself through his honesty. They're kind of genius, too.

Of course, it might not have hurt that *Confessions* was released against the backdrop of his real-life, high-profile break-up with Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas of TLC. After their split, she let it slip — somewhat bitterly — that just like the man in the song, he had confessed to being unfaithful to her. Suddenly, *Confessions* looks even less like ordinary pop, more like great autobiography. Usher insists that though the CD is inspired by real life, the details are imagined. The getting-the-girl-pregnant part of "Confessions Part II" is, Usher insists, complete fantasy.

He settles into his seat on the tour bus en route to the English city of Nottingham — another stop on his sold-out Truth tour of the U.K. — a bottle of water in front of him. Wearing a skull cap, a white T-shirt and combat pants, he's relaxed and friendly — soft-spoken but confident. This is his time, and he knows it.

So you're famously single now. Famously? [Laughs]

Well, it's one of the top celebrity splits of the year.

It came at one of the worst times and one of the best times. 'Cause I've never felt so naked. I mean, it's like the topic of discussion in barbershops around the world, you know what I mean? "Oh girl, he cheated on his girlfriend and he has a baby!" I'm just makin' music, you know what I mean? You can't believe everything you hear.

What will men never understand about women?

Why do good girls like bad guys? Why do good guys like bad girls? I don't know what that is. I guess it's to feel like they can fix something. We all have the need to try to change someone.

What should every man know about women?

You can't give her everything she wants.

The first time you had sex, you were 19 and you were —

Nervous. Y'know, losing your virginity is something that is very sacred, y'know? But in the event I decided to lose it, it was, like, OK. →

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91	Stolichnaya Vodka
90	Tanqueray Sterling Vodka
90	Rain 1995 Harvest Vodka
89	Ketel One Vodka
88	Wyborowa Vodka
87	Kremlyovskaya Vodka
86	Finlandia Vodka of Finland
86	Alps French Vodka
85	Sky Vodka
82	Original Polish Vodka
82	Glenmore Special
82	Fleischmann's Royal Vodka
81	Mr. Boston Vodka
80	Pole Star Vodka
80	Lukusowa Potato Vodka
80	Absolut Vodka
78	Cardinal Vodka
78	Barton Vodka
78	Barclay's Vodka
78	Amazon Vodka
76	Skol Vodka
74	Smirnoff Vodka
74	Crystal Palace Vodka
74	Belvedere
72	Schenley
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How do you rate your sex drive on a scale of one to 10?

20.

What's a good aphrodisiac?

I mean, some people say chocolate, some people say fruit, some people say oysters or whatever. A woman's scent is my aphrodisiac.

Really? Any brand?

There's plenty of scents. You know, I love patchouli. I love, um, there's many different fragrances. I'm sorry, I'm a sucker for scent.

Do you have a sexual fantasy you'd like to fulfill?

[Pause] Nope. Nope.

You've fulfilled them all?

Plenty.

Tell us about a sexual fantasy that you have fulfilled, then?

Nah. [Laughs] Don't go down there, man.

Have you ever tied somebody up?

Have I ever tied somebody up?

Or been tied up yourself?

Have I ever tied somebody up? I can't say that I have, no. [Laughs] Maybe there are some fantasies I have yet to experience.

IF I SEE A WOMAN COURTING MY WOMAN, I GET JEALOUS."

Two women going at it in a bed: Is that something you find sexy?

Um. . . . It's not normal.

It's not normal?

It ain't normal — and it's most men's fantasy. I mean, sex for me is really all about pleasing my partner. And so if that's something that she wants, then I'd do it for her. I ain't ever really got a kick out of two women being together at the same time.

Is it something you've seen?

You know, whenever I've been confronted with it, I got jealous. Like, if I see a woman courting my woman, I get jealous. Like, am I, as a man, not good enough? I've seen a lot of stuff. You see stuff like that in strip clubs. Sometimes not even in strip clubs, and . . . it wasn't really my cup of tea.

How do you define sex appeal?

Sex appeal? Hmm. You either have it or you don't. To be sexy is not contrived. But it is truly submitting to a person and understanding them that makes you sexy. Because you have to understand what's sexy to them. →

BURN, BABY, BURN!

A quivering 12-pack of Usher's greatest musical moments

1 "YEAH!"

CONFESSIONS
LA FACE/ARISTA, 2004

R&B reimagined as a disco under terrorist siege, with Lil Jon orchestrating this cluster bomb of crunk and soul.

BEST MOMENT The gaggle of women who whisper, "Usher, Usher, Usher." He'll be taking one of them home tonight. (0:08)

2 "RED LIGHT"

YEAH! CD SINGLE
LA FACE/ARISTA, 2004

Lil Jon makes with the scare synths while Usher laments the one who got away.

BEST MOMENT A digitized flute beats out a rhythm while Usher realizes his one-night stand is going to remain just that. (3:03)

3 "NICE & SLOW (B-ROCK'S BASEMENT MIX)"

NICE & SLOW: THE REMIXES EP
LA FACE/ARISTA, 1998

Produced by B-Rock, who is responsible for the essential bass track "My Baby Daddy," and featuring a rap from a pre-fame Twista, this is Usher for speed freaks.

BEST MOMENT The raspy call-and-response on the hook. (1:00)

4 "U DON'T HAVE TO CALL (REMIX)"

U DON'T HAVE TO CALL
CD SINGLE
LA FACE/ARISTA, 2002

After the break-up, the melancholy. Usher grabs the rebound, thanks to sprightly Neptunes synths and two splendiferous sex raps from Ludacris.

BEST MOMENT Luda steals this one, teasing, "You wookin' pa nub in all the wrong places." (2:44)

5 "CALL ME A MACK"

POETIC JUSTICE SOUNDTRACK
EPIC, 1993

Usher's great, lost New Jack Swing moment samples Ice Cube and has percussion as crisp as the kid's hairdo.

BEST MOMENT Usher's opening gambit: "I may be young, but I got a whole lotta man in me." (0:23)

6 "YOU MAKE ME WANNA"

MY WAY
LA FACE/ARISTA, 1997

"What's sad is that I love her/But I'm falling for you," Usher wails. Can't say there weren't warning signs, Chilli.

BEST MOMENT Producer Jermaine Dupri cuts his quick-fire snares with sampled vocal "ahs." (2:34)

7 "MY WAY (J.D.'S REMIX)"

MY WAY CD SINGLE
LA FACE/ARISTA, 1998

Meet Usher, modern-day Marquis de Sade: "What I say goes/I'm in control." He couldn't be more casual, as if filching another man's gal has become boring.

BEST MOMENT The multi-tracked chorus. (0:44, 1:26, 2:31)

8 "U GOT IT BAD"

8701
LA FACE/ARISTA, 2001

Even the most blustery lothario can find love. The lion is tamed, falsetto-style:

"Everything that used to matter, it don't matter no more/My money, all my cars."

BEST MOMENT The quiver in Usher's voice when he sings "You hang up, and you call right back." (2:40)

9 "DREAM GIRL"

KEEP DREAMING
FOUR SIGHT, 1994

Most of the songs cut by Usher's first group, Nu Beginning, were gruesomely saccharine. This puppy-love ballad transcends, thanks to Usher's earnest over-piping and the prepubescent harmonies of the crew.

BEST MOMENT When the soul-jazz saxophones kick in, boy do they ever. (0:22)

10 "BEDTIME"

LIVE
LA FACE/ARISTA, 1999

Onstage in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Usher pours it on thick, with seven minutes of syrupy come-ons punctuated by bursts of crowd derangement.

BEST MOMENT "Girl, there's nothing I won't do to you," he gasps with sermon-delivering confidence. (3:43)

11 "SEPARATED"

8701 [IMPORT VERSION]
BMG, 2001

The rare Usher ballad with heart, this wrongly missed the cut for the domestic 8701. Usher philosophizes, "If love was an ocean, then we are just a stream."

BEST MOMENT The indignation on "Why don't you go your way?/And I'll go mine." (1:57)

12 "CONFESSIONS PART II"

CONFESSIONS
ARISTA, 2004

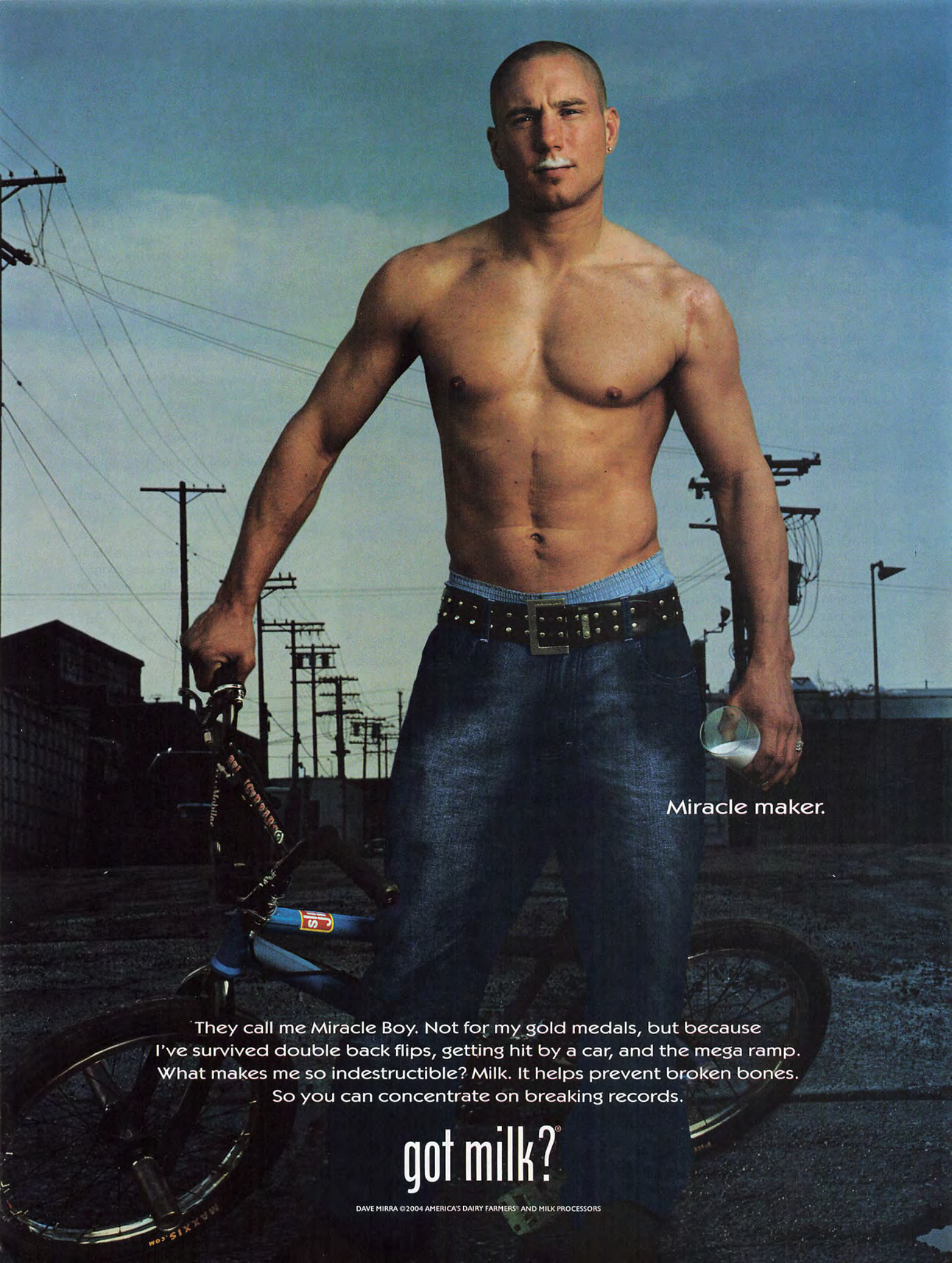
One can safely assume Chilli skips this virtual play-by-play of a man's brain melt upon learning he has impregnated the other woman. Woops.

BEST MOMENT Usher drops an octave at the realization, "I need to stop thinking, contemplating/Be a man and get it over with." (1:46)

JON CARAMANICA



"Damn moths!"



Miracle maker.

They call me Miracle Boy. Not for my gold medals, but because I've survived double back flips, getting hit by a car, and the mega ramp. What makes me so indestructible? Milk. It helps prevent broken bones. So you can concentrate on breaking records.

got milk?[®]

DAVE MIRRA ©2004 AMERICA'S DAIRY FARMERS AND MILK PROCESSORS

When it comes to women, do you go for a type?

Nah. I'm too young for that. Y'know, I got to leave my options open in the event that one day Salma Hayek is available or Halle Berry gives me a call.

Would you ever date a musician again, or is that too hard to make work?

I can't say I wouldn't. No. It's all dependent on the person, man. I think the next one'll probably be an actress.

Are all men untrustworthy?

Most women are too. All women. All women can have a tendency to drift as well as men.

But women are just better at covering it up?

Much better. A woman will never tell. Confessions? You'll never hear a woman confess.

You told Rozonda you had cheated on her. Has a woman ever been that honest with you about cheating?

No. No one has been that honest with me.

People assume that much of the CD is about your split with Rozonda and the fallout. Do you regret being public about your personal relationships?

You know, I don't really think of exposing my personal life to my audience as a good thing or a bad thing. In my case, the more public you are, the more people know about you, the more they are excited about you as an artist. I think the greatest [singers] have done themselves justice by using their own experiences to tell stories. You know, R. Kelly and Marvin Gaye — he always does that — even Michael Jackson. It works for me to let go of a lot of my demons. I do that through my music. You know the whole story of cheating on my woman — that is obviously something that happened, and I definitely ain't proud of it. But y'know, unfortunately, [Rozonda] made everyone aware of it.

You wouldn't have chosen to do that?

I wouldn't have chosen to tell the world about it. No, I wouldn't.

What's not sexy?

Bad feet. Hairy legs. To me anyway. Some men might find it sexy, but it's not my preference. I like a woman who likes to take care of herself, because it says something about the way she'll care for me.



↑ Usher, age 13



Lil Jon, Ludacris and Usher perform on MTV's TRL, March 23, 2004



Usher with then-girlfriend Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas at the 3rd Annual BET Awards, June 23, 2003

On "Bad Girl" you sing about how you want to take a girl to the restroom and — Oh yeah.

That's one experience you've ticked off the list?
Oh yeah.

What's the worst place you've had sex then?
In a bunk.

What? In a tour bus? [Blender looks nervously at the bunk behind Usher.]
Yep.

What's too freaky for Usher?
Too freaky? What do you mean?

Like Ludacris says on "Yeah!": "We want a lady in the street and a freak in the bed." What kind of freaky?

Oh yeah. For sure. I mean, it's good to have yourself a hole in the sheet for the lady in the street, y'know what I mean? Ain't nothing wrong with that. But what's too freaky for me? [Pause] I think I've

"LOSING YOUR VIRGINITY IS SOMETHING THAT IS VERY SACRED."

kinda seen it all, man, you know what I'm sayin'?

You're only 25 and you sound jaded. . . . Whoa, whoa, whoa. What do you mean, "jaded"? Like I'm done with it? Time out. I'm not jaded. But when you've seen it, it's not a shock anymore. I haven't participated in a

ménage à trois, or in orgies or anything like that, but I've seen it.

Can we ask where you've seen it? Does it matter?

We like details.
I'll plead the Fifth. [Laughs]

What do you need to have when you're on tour?

I have to have my telephone. I have these, my diamond earrings. And M&M's. I love M&M's.

You're not the sort of star who insists on having M&M's in their dressing room, are you? You don't have them picking out the colors you don't like?

Yes, I do. I have red, green, yellow and blue — all separate. And I take my pick for the night.

You're a proper star.

You're not a proper star if you don't have a rider like that. And fresh orchids in every room. And the flowers ain't just for me — that's for my entourage.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ON THE BUS, Usher's mom, Jonetta Patton, phones. The tour manager takes the call. Usher's mom is also his co-manager. In the absence of his dad, Usher Raymond III, she raised him and has looked after his career from day one. But it can be a difficult relationship. The most down-in-the-mouth look Usher ever gives is when he talks about her. He fights with her frequently, as artists tend to do with their managers. "I have," he says, "been a complete asshole in dealing with her. Y'know, she helped me make it through a lot of hard times, and I helped her make it through. Those hard times have gone away, but maybe we don't pay attention to the relationship anymore."

On the phone, Patton is asking the tour manager if the news she's reading on the wires is true. Did Usher really moon the London press last night? The tour manager says he doesn't know. He wasn't with Usher when he went after-show clubbing last night.

"Yeah, I did," Usher says with an →

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impish grin. The previous night, he was exiting London's Funky Buddha nightclub when the flashes started going off. One of the photographers tried opening the door of Usher's car. He responded by giving them more than they wanted.

"You know what?" he says. "I think the paparazzi is so ridiculous. I just wanted to see what would happen. So they put it in the paper? Oh wow. My *arse*. Well, now all those people I tell to kiss it know what it looks like."

Usher: Even his ass is cool.

The papers also report that he took several "leggy" girls with him from the club back to his hotel. The London press would never let the fact that the girls in question were just his dancers get in the way of a story. He is, after all, a Love God.

At the show, fans swoon. They tear up. Girls wish they weren't going home with their boyfriends. They mouth, "Oh my God!" as he pumps the floor, push-up-style for "Nice and Slow." "Now tell me/ Do you wanna get freaky/'Cause I'll freak you right, I will/I'll freak you like no one has ever made you feel." The arena fills with screams.

The dancers are beautiful and sexy; the band is good. But it's Usher alone who carries the set. He's athletic, energized and sweats charisma. The girls love him for what he does to their hormones; the boys love him for showing them how to be smooth. Usher's show is pure theater.

During "Bad Girl," the dancers pick a girl from the crowd. They sit her on the sofa. Usher woos her with ballads, gives her roses, then leads her into the darkness where you can only guess what he's doing to her.

Next, he's into "Confessions Part II."

Within 15 minutes, he's pulled the girl, given her roses, bedded her and cheated on her. Ordinary mortals don't even stand a chance.

"I'VE NEVER FELT SO NAKED."



ARE YOU A ROCK & ROLL SEX GOD?

Complete this simple quiz to find out if you're a perfect 10 – or 10 kinds of ugly

1 Which TV show did you last appear on?

- A VH1 All Access: Rock Bodies
- B I Want a Famous Face
- C Ripley's Believe It or Not

2 What famous person do you most closely resemble?

- A Jessica Simpson
- B Marge Simpson
- C Chief Wiggum



3 What kind of groupies do you attract?

- A Supermodels, the hotter tennis players, Winona Ryder
- B The ones your roadies don't want
- C "What kind of who do I what?"

4 When you look in the mirror, you see...

- A A six-pack
- B Someone holding a six-pack
- C You don't allow mirrors in the house

5 What do people most often say when they meet you on the street?

- A "Wow, you're even sexier in real life than in your videos."
- B "Cheer up – looks aren't everything."
- C "What the hell is that on your nose?"

IF YOU ANSWERED...

MOSTLY A: Congratulations, you're a 10! And, uh, what are you doing later?

MOSTLY B: Congratulations, you're a 10! But only if the rating system goes up to 100.

MOSTLY C: What the hell is that on your nose? CLARK COLLIS

From the screaming crowd, a girl holds up a placard: "Usher I Love U. Pop My Cherry."

★★★★★

MUCH LATER, AS the tour bus pulls away for the next leg of the journey, Usher Raymond IV sits quietly while the fans scream, running alongside. Girls wave, hanging out of car windows, hoping to catch his attention. He doesn't even blink.

Do you have make-out music?

Yeah. I love the Isley Brothers, Marvin Gaye, Luther Vandross, Al Green.

Old-school make-out music.

Yeah, Keith Sweat, Shirley Murdock. I've made love to my own music before. A woman asked me to put it on. It was the weirdest experience I think I've ever had in my life. 'Cause you're in the middle of sex and she's looking at you and you're like, OK, do I sing to her? Or do I let her sing? Or do we just enjoy the moment? Do you know what I mean? [Laughs] But she asked for it, so, like I say, it's all about pleasing your partner when you're in the middle of that.

What track did you do it to?

"That's What It's Made For."

Really? There couldn't be a more appropriate song.

[Sample lyric: "Oh baby, turn it around... / So I can do you like this, baby/ So I can freak you like this."]

And she had a good time?

I think she did.

You have this thing with women. Power. Does power corrupt?

I've always been pretty stable 'cause I had a very comfortable childhood. I've watched family members and others go through their unfortunate circumstances with women or dealing with children. I've been looking at how it affects them, how it affects the man, how it affects the woman. You have to be careful. I'm very responsible in that area. I was introduced, believe it or not, to condoms at a very young age. It was always taught to me, y'know, if you're gonna have sex, you've got to be responsible.

Who told you about that sex stuff?

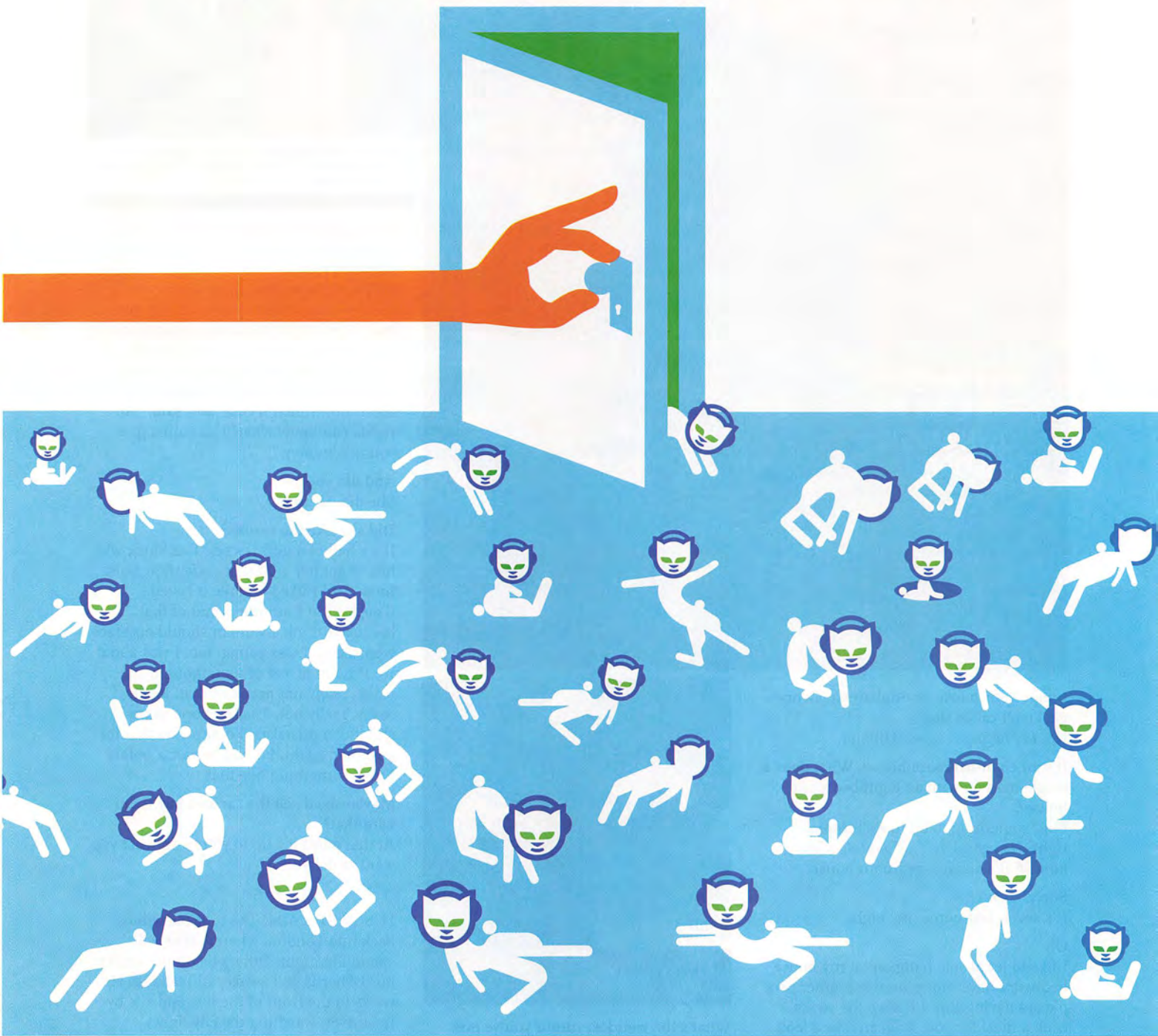
That was actually my mother. Y'know, the little birds-and-bees talk. I never was afraid to talk about it. I'd ask my mother, "When am I gonna be ready?" [Laughs] "Can I do it now?"

What would you like to have named after you?

A city.

You are now entering the city of Usher. Or a hall. The house of Usher. →

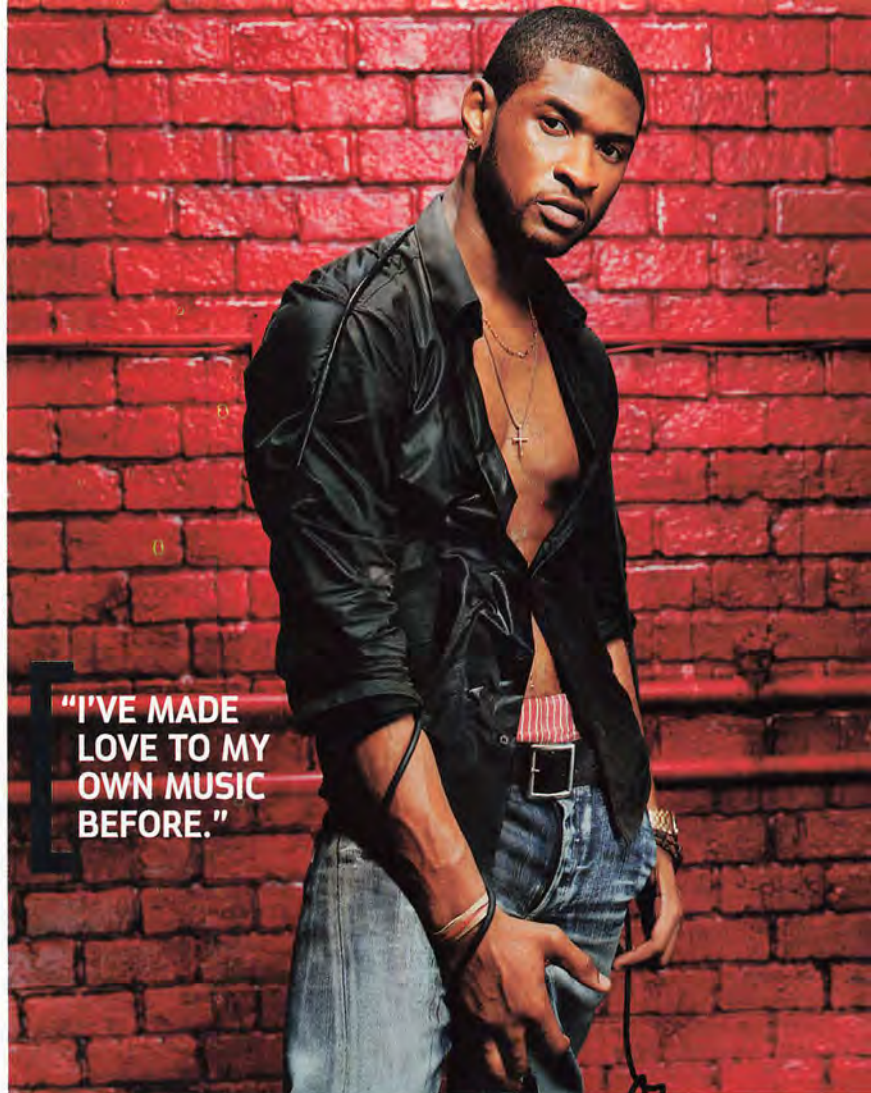
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"I'VE MADE LOVE TO MY OWN MUSIC BEFORE."

I hope your house [in Alpharetta, Georgia.] isn't called that.

No. My house is called Hitland.

It's an eight-bedroom house. What does a single man do with an eight-bedroom house?

Find something to do in each room, right? [Laughs] Uh. . . [Counting silently to himself] It's a seven-bedroom house.

Sorry?

It's seven bedrooms, not eight.

Oh.

I like to let people hang out at my house because I have more fun when other people are having fun. I'll have the cooks cook a meal for you, you can take a look at the wide-screen TVs, jump in the pool, take a look at the fish, go to the bar and make yourself a drink, run on the treadmill, listen to some loud music or produce a record.

What do you keep on your bedside table? Condoms. My telephone. A candle. Notepad and pencil. I love orchids — wild orchids.

What would you never be caught dead in? Briefs. You'll never catch me in a pair of briefs. I'll wear boxer briefs, but not briefs. I call them punk panties.



Usher and Justin Timberlake at an NBA playoff game, May 27, 2004

What's the weirdest rumor you've ever heard about Usher?

That I was gay.

That's quite weird, considering...

Yeee-ah. Have you ever seen my show?

Do you ever try to buy a woman's attention with gifts?

No, I don't. I offer a gift as a compliment. I don't buy her attention. I might send her flowers once I know her. I've always thought that jewelry was a great gift. A candle. It's the simple things in life that people forget. If I hear she's conscious of something in herself, like, if I notice that



Usher, First Lady Laura Bush, Pres. George W. Bush and Usher's mom, Jonetta Patton, at TNT's Christmas in Washington, Dec. 9, 2001

maybe she hasn't had her nails done, I'll maybe send her to a spa or something like that. [Pause] Y'know what? I'll tell you probably the wildest thing I have ever done — and I can't even say I'm proud of this — but there was this woman I dated and she was conscious of her breasts. And she'd talk and talk and talk about having breast implants, always talking about how much it cost. So I said, "All right. You know what? I'm gonna give you this money."

And did she?

She did. [Laughs]

Did she like the results?

It's a hell of a gift! It's one that stuck with her. It got her a lot more attention from men. And I liked it while it lasted.

[Laughs] But I am not proud of that, because I think a woman should embrace who she is. I was young, too. I was about 18. I'm not proud of that, though. I'm really, really not proud of that. Really, really, really not. That was one of my childhood mistakes. I'd never do that for a woman again. I'd buy her a car before I'd do something like that.

Maybe she'd sell the car and buy them with that?

At that point it's up to you to do what you want to do with it.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IT'S PAST 2 A.M. The tour bus winds back into London, where Usher will spend the night. Others lie on the bunks, but Usher is still awake, still talking. He walks to the front of the bus and sits by the driver, watching the city lights.

What's the longest you've slept straight in the last week?

About two hours.

That's the longest?

Yeah. I don't sleep, man.

Is that always the way?

Yeah.

How do you do it?

They call me "Superman." And I ain't done one lick of drugs, man. No drugs.

You've got to sleep some time!

I'll sleep when I'm dead. [BLENDER]

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FAN FASHION

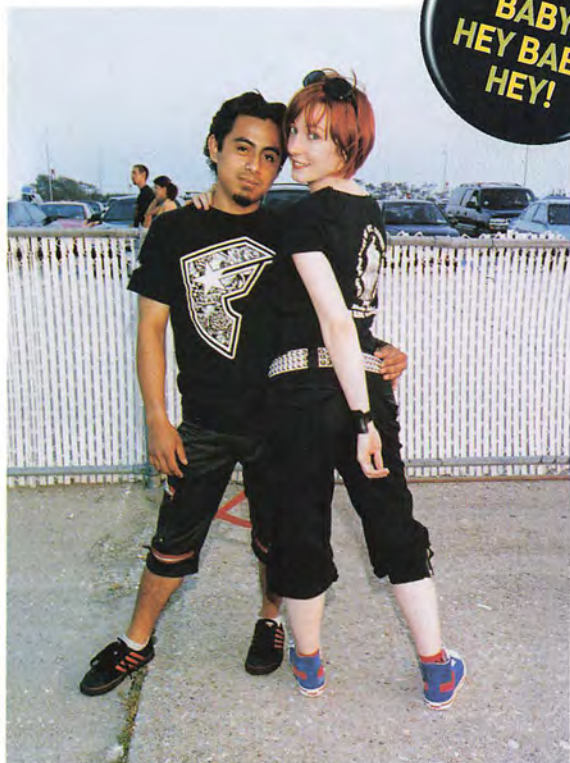
It's the definitive guide to music's best-dressed devotees! *Blender* attends four shows, photographs 21 fans — and finds a whole load of style everywhere!

BY KELLY RAE, ASSISTED BY
JOANNA LARACUENTE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHUCK BARNES

★ ON HIM: ANGEL FCUK SHIRT BY FAMOUS STARS AND STRAPS, \$18, FAMOUSSTARS.COM; RINCON SHIRTS BY HURLEY, \$58, HURLEY.COM; JEWELRY BY KING BABY STUDIOS, \$340-\$1,695, KINGBABYSTUDIO.COM; CLASSIC SLIP-ON SNEAKERS BY VANS, \$35, VANS.COM. ON HER: MESH POPLIN TOP BY TRIPLE S SOUL, \$44, TRIPLESSOUL.COM; VINYL BRA BY DEBORAH MARQUIT, \$68, AT LE CORSET BY SELIMA, NYC; PLEATED TWEED SKIRT BY L.A.M.B., \$215, AT SAKS FIFTH AVENUE, NYC; HOOP SWAROVSKI POST EARRINGS, \$220, AND PRIZE RIBBON GLOVE, \$350, BY SUBVERSIVE JEWELRY BY JUSTIN GIUNTA, SUBVERSIVEJEWELRY.COM; CRISS-CROSS STOCKINGS BY LEG AVENUE, \$3.50, LEG- AVENUE.COM; SUPERKNOCKOUT "GOLD" SHOES BY REEBOK, \$110, REEBOK.COM



HEY
BABY,
HEY BABY,
HEY!



FIDEL VAZQUEZ 20 WAITER, MEXICO CITY

T-SHIRT BY STARS AND STRIPES AT TRASH AND VAUDEVILLE; PANTS BY TRIPP;
SHOES BY STREET VISION

ELIZABETH FRASER 24 RESTAURANT MANAGER, NEW YORK

T-SHIRT BY BROOKLYN; PANTS BY H&M; SHOES AND BELT FROM TRASH AND VAUDEVILLE



AVERY HAYES 16 STUDENT, NEW YORK

SELF-THRASHED CRAMPS T-SHIRT; SKIRT FROM ANGRYYOUNGANDPOOR.COM;
SHOES FROM TRASH AND VAUDEVILLE

TOMMY HILFIGER AT JONES BEACH THEATER, WANTAGH, NEW YORK, JUNE 9, 2004

NO DOUBT

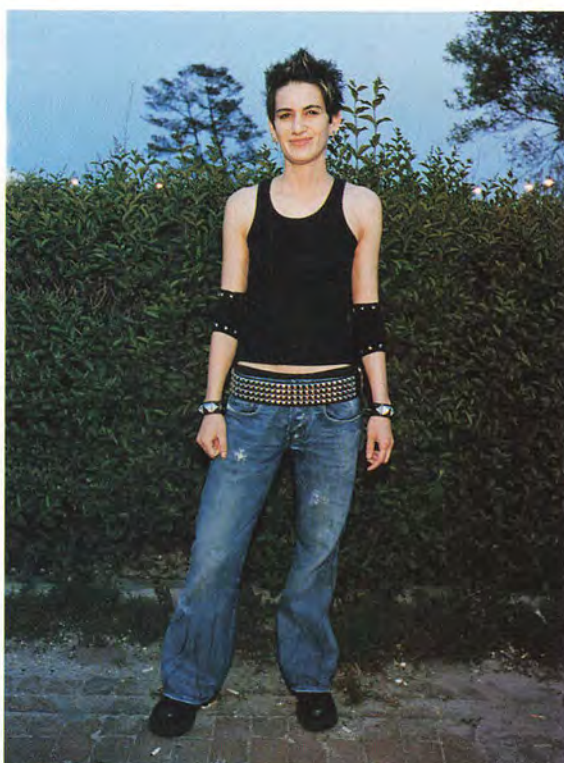


ANDA 28 STYLIST, NEW YORK

T-SHIRT BY RALPH LAUREN; BRA BY GAP; VINTAGE THERMAL; SILVER SHOES
BY ADIDAS; PANTS BY KATAYONE ADELI

MASHA 29 STYLIST, YUGOSLAVIA

BOWIE ZIGGY STARDUST T-SHIRT; PANTS BY DICKIES; SILVER SHOES BY NIKE;
BELT FROM BARNEYS



HEATHER MONDELLO 25 MASSAGE THERAPIST, LONG ISLAND,
NEW YORK

WIFE-BEATER T-SHIRT; JEANS BY DIESEL; SHOES BY REPORT; FOUR-STUDDED BELT FROM A
BIKER SHOP

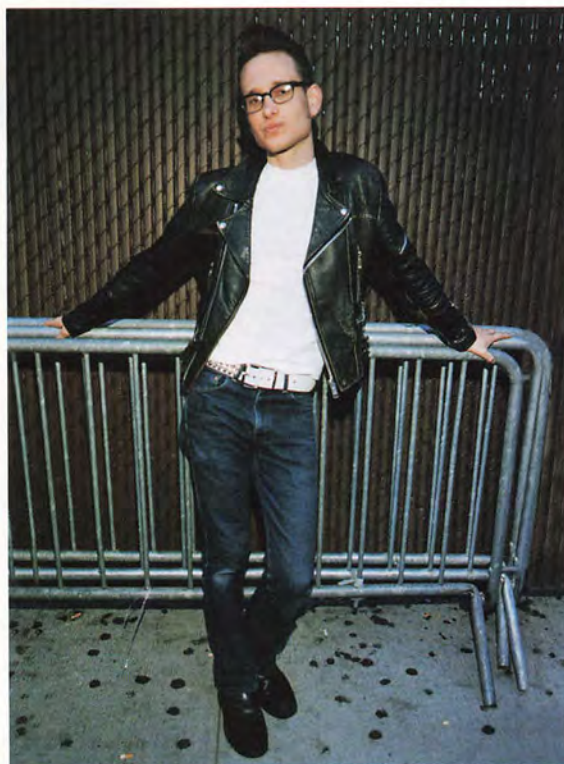
THIS
CHARMING
MAN!



BRIAN AMSTERDAM 17 STUDENT, NEW JERSEY
SHIRT AND TIE BY RONNIE; VINTAGE HORSE-RIDING JACKET; SHOES BY CONVERSE



MICHELLE NICOLE 22 ACTRESS/STYLIST, CHICAGO
PURSE BY H&M; BELT BY PORTOBELLO MARKET; PANTS BY AIR D; TOP BY PATRICIA FIELDS



JESS 25 DJ, BROOKLYN
SHIRT FROM THE SALVATION ARMY; VINTAGE LEATHER JACKET FROM SCOTLAND;
STRAIGHT-LEG 517 JEANS BY LEVI'S; SHOES BY SKECHERS; WALLET FROM WAL-MART



ROMEO MOORE 29 MUSICIAN IN THE DEEP AWAKE, CROATIA
V-NECK T-SHIRT BY COUNTY SEAT; TROUSERS BY BURBERRY; SHOES BY PUMA;
PLATINUM WATCH AND WHITE GOLD RING BY CARPE DIEM

APOLLO THEATER, NEW YORK, MAY 7, 2004

MORRISSEY



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DEVIL'S
NIGHT
DUDS!



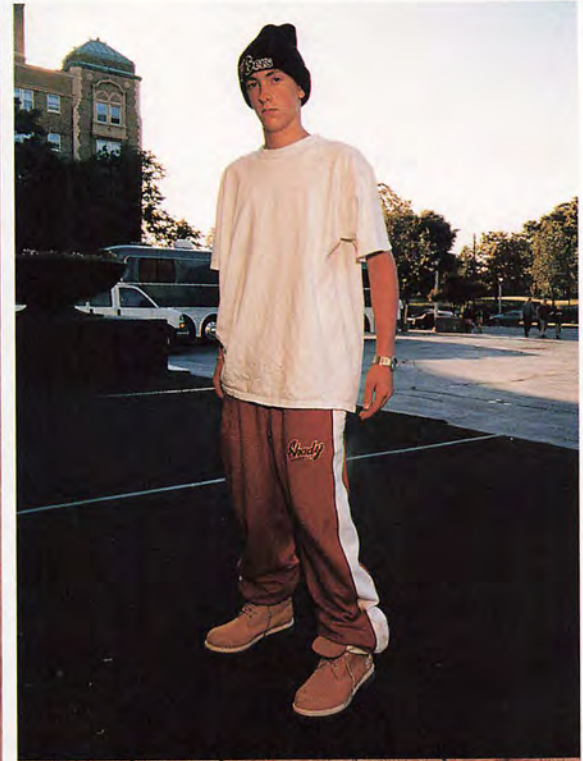
ROCK 3...16 25 PRODUCER, MILWAUKEE
SHORTS BY ROCAWEAR; THROWBACK DALLAS NBA BASKETBALL JERSEY;
CLASSICS SHOES BY FUBU; MOUNTAIN-BIKE GLOVES



ROB BRENSINGER 21 RAPPER, MILWAUKEE
MILWAUKEE BREWERS MAJOR-LEAGUE BASEBALL THROWBACK JERSEY; BREWERS CAP;
SHORTS BY BROOKLYN 70; SHOES BY REEBOK



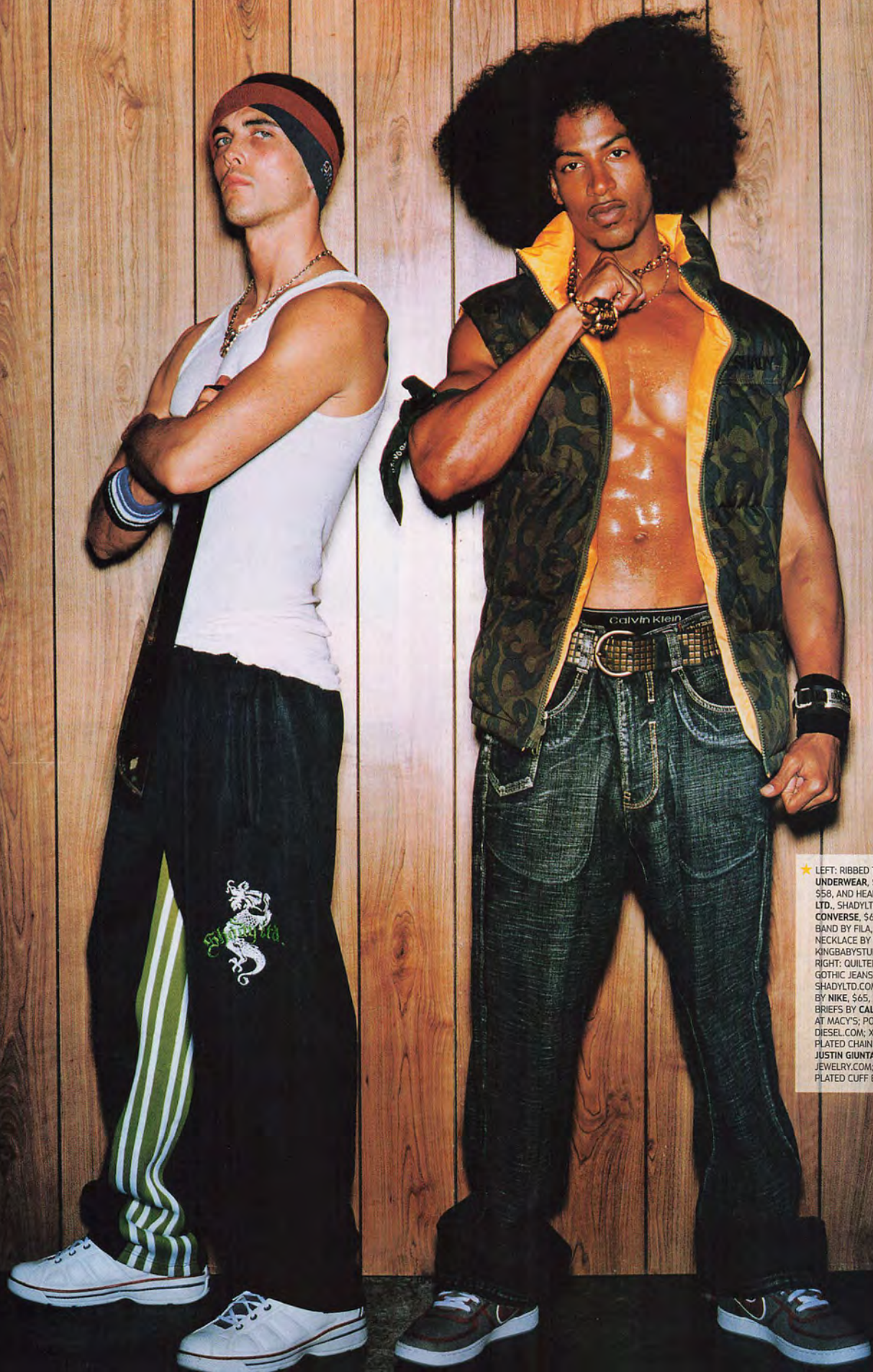
ALEJANDRO VASQUEZ 21 RAPPER, NEW YORK
SHIRT BY BIGSTA; JEANS BY POLO; SHOES BY CONVERSE; RED NEW YORK YANKEES HAT
HUMBERTO COLON 24 RAPPER, MILWAUKEE
TOP AND BOTTOM BY AXDMKS; SHOES BY NIKE AIR



BEN WINDAU 14 STUDENT, MILWAUKEE
BOOTS BY TIMBERLAND; PANTS BY SHADY LTD.; SHIRT BY FOOT LOCKER

THE RAVE, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, JUNE 19, 2004

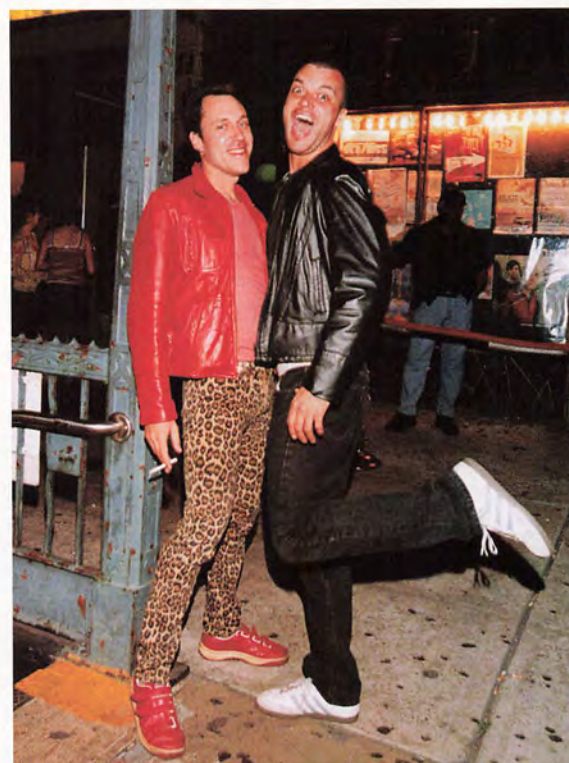
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★ LEFT: RIBBED TANK TOP BY CALVIN KLEIN UNDERWEAR, \$15, AT MACY'S; TRACK PANTS, \$58, AND HEADBANDS, \$8 EACH, BY SHADY LTD., SHADYLTD.COM; ALL STAR 2K4 OX BY CONVERSE, \$60, CONVERSE.COM; WRIST-BAND BY FILA, \$6, 800-776-3452; CROWN NECKLACE BY KING BABY STUDIOS, \$745, KINGBABYSTUDIO.COM
RIGHT: QUILTED DOWN VEST, \$90, AND GOTHIC JEANS, \$68, BY SHADY LTD., SHADYLTD.COM; VANDAL CANVAS HI'S SHOES BY NIKE, \$65, NIKETOWN.COM; BOXER BRIEFS BY CALVIN KLEIN UNDERWEAR, \$19, AT MACY'S; POPEY BELT BY DIESEL, \$73, DIESEL.COM; XXXL NFL RING ON GOLD-PLATED CHAIN BY SUBVERSIVE JEWELRY BY JUSTIN GIUNTA, \$800, SUBVERSIVE-JEWELRY.COM; LIMITED-EDITION LEATHER-PLATED CUFF BY BUDDHIST PUNK, \$460



KATHERINE KIM 25 CHEMIST, NEW JERSEY
SHIRT BY H&M, HAT AND FLIP-FLOPS BY OLD NAVY, SELF-MADE SKIRT



CARY YORK 35 GARDENER, NEW YORK
1970 RED VINTAGE LEATHER JACKET; CHEETAH PANTS BY INTERNATIONAL MALE;
SHOES VINTAGE PUMA

COREY HARRIS 36 GO-GO DANCER, NEW YORK
BELT BUCKLE BY WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND; SHOES BY ADIDAS; EVERYTHING ELSE
VINTAGE HOOKER WEAR

BOWERY BALLROOM, NEW YORK, MAY 22, 2004

SCISSOR SISTERS



JULIE RUIZ 24 GRAPHIC DESIGNER, ARKANSAS
SHIRT BY URBAN OUTFITTERS; VINTAGE SHORTS; SHOES BY MIZ NOOD; BAG BY H&M

JARED GOMEZ 25 HAIRSTYLIST, UTAH
JACKET AND PANTS BY LEVI'S; BELT BY PANYC; VINTAGE BOOTS; TATTOOS BY
JOHN CHATALIAN IN SALT LAKE CITY



HELEN DEALTRY 25 FASHION DESIGNER, ENGLAND
DRESS BY ELLA MOSS; VINTAGE SHOES AND BAG

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NINA RICH

TAKE
YOUR MAMA
OUT ALL
NIGHT!



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U.S. ARMY



130
THE LIBERTINES
A brilliant band besieged by crime and drug addiction tries to hold itself together by singing about undertakers
★★★



150
VAN HALEN
From Diamond Dave's cheeky lechery to Sammy Hagar's horndog howl, the party-metallars' greatest hits
★★★



166
MADONNA
The Artist Currently Known as Esther plays her classics. At \$300 a ticket, is she worth it?
★★★★

The Guide

THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM

NEW RELEASES	130
CHART	146
MY MUSIC	148
REISSUES	150
BACK CATALOG	162
LIVE!	166
MOVIES	170
DVDS	172
BOOKS	174
GAMES	176

The Notorious B.I.G.

The XXL godfather of gangsta glamour returns, expanded and unbeatable, p 152

In the Breakdown Lane

London's answer to the Strokes fall apart in public

THE LIBERTINES

THE LIBERTINES

☆☆☆

ROUGH TRADE

IN OCTOBER 2002, the Libertines' cocktail of overexcited guitars and drunken Cockney vocals produced their crackling debut, *Up the Bracket*, which smitten *Blender* editors declared the sixth-best record of the year. Like a faster Clash with a dash of Johnny Thunders (both in terms of sonic sloppiness and drug preference), their riotous sing-along rock & roll announced a band that could go places if only they could stay in one piece, or, indeed, convince anyone to grant them visas.

Fat chance. Last July, singer Pete Doherty, temporarily exiled from the Libertines on account of his extreme drugginess, burglarized bandmate Carl Barât's London apartment, a crime for which he served a month in jail. Since his release in October, he has ricocheted between heroin and crack scores, playing impromptu solo shows for cash (convenient for further drug buys) and releasing a U.K. Top 10 single — an unexpectedly beautiful ballad entitled "For Lovers" — with a drinking buddy known as "Wolfman."

In June, after failed rehab attempts in London and France, Doherty was dispatched to Thailand's Thamkrabok

Monastery for a strict cold-turkey detox treatment notable for its reliance on purifying bouts of projectile vomiting. Doherty stomachached this for about a week before going AWOL in smack-sodden Bangkok. When he reappeared in London in June, he was promptly arrested for possession of a switchblade knife, a charge to which he pleaded not guilty. And so on.

This side of Doherty — unpredictable, creatively impulsive, rarely compos mentis — is a large part of what makes the Libertines Britain's most compelling rock & roll phenomenon. As his cowriter/co-singer Barât is well aware, it could also kill him. It's a terrible dilemma. Barât and Doherty's intense friendship — which is routinely enacted live when they rip their shirts off and trade lead vocal lines nipple-to-nipple — is the whole point of the Libertines. And the new album's best tracks — the rampant "Can't Stand Me Now" as much as the poignant "Music When the Lights Go Out" — depict argumentative love-hate relationships indistinguishable from their own. With Doherty's future in the band in question again (jail looms; drugs are a given; hope sets like the sun), we could well be

listening to the Libertines' last hurrah.

Predictably, perhaps, it's a ramshackle one. With recording rationed to the rare windows when Doherty wasn't AWOL, nothing save "Can't Stand Me Now" feels properly finished. The Clash's Mick Jones — producer of *Up the Bracket* — again presides, but he can't do much with lumpen, half-formed things like "Tomblands" apart from turn up Gary Powell's demonic drumming and hope for the best.

There are some fine songs here. "The Ha Ha Wall" is full of surprises, including a middle eight like a madman on a carousel. And "What Katie Did" is an enchantingly

Beatlesque music-hall ditty with guitars that paw each other, tell jokes and fall out of the pub in a heap; we can only presume its lyric — "Hurry up, Mrs. Brown, I can feel it coming down" — is a coded ode to heroin. No other band uses such arcane language ("I like the cut of your jib") or employs so colorful a cast of undertakers, drug dealers and hung-over lovers. Add to that their sheer, frenzied energy — more than ever like the Hamburg Beatles hopped up on Preludin and lashing into their third set of the night — and at its best the sum is potent, original rock & roll.

Maybe the Libertines can see the mess they've got themselves into; there's certainly no scarcity of allusions to their predicament. "I've been told that if you want to make it in this game, gotta have the luck, gotta have the look," Doherty sings in "The Man Who Would Be King," whose protagonists are living a royal dream but sound miserable all the same. More pointed still is "What Became of the Likely Lads," the second-catchiest song on the record but also a requiem for two promising young fellows who failed to fulfill their promise. Does that sound like anyone we know?

If extra credit were awarded to records plucked from the teeth of adversity, we would gladly award the Libertines' second album five shiny red stars. It could have been a world-beater. Instead we must settle for a thrilling, frustrating souvenir of a band whirling out of control. **TONY POWER**

DOWNLOAD THESE "Can't Stand Me Now," "What Katie Did"

A CAST OF UNDERTAKERS, DEALERS AND HUNG-OVER LOVERS.

THE LIBERTINES' INSPIRATIONS BY CARL BARÂT



BELLE AND SEBASTIAN
IF YOU'RE FEELING SINISTER
MATADOR, 1996

Scottish soft-popsters' indie breakthrough about daydreamy girls and adolescent gay love. "It's very sentimental but very powerful, too. It's a bit wishy-washy in places, but overall very lovable, calming and twee."



RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
EPIC, 1992

The must-have rap-rock album for Noam Chomsky buffs. "It's utterly passionate, with meticulously spat-out poetry that's so full of meaning. A little bit of [Zack de la Rocha's] fury influenced me. Not a note is wasted here, which is the mirror opposite of our album, where a lot of notes are wasted!"



LOVE
FOREVER CHANGES
ELEKTRA, 1967

Sixties folk/psychedelic rockers from Southern California, fronted by loose-cannon proto-punk Arthur Lee. "I found out about them only recently. It sounds like hippie music, with delicate, spiraling chord changes you wouldn't expect. It twists and turns, and if you listen to the words, you see Lee's got a lot to say. I love 'Alone Again Or.'"



DJANGO REINHARDT AND STEPHANE GRAPPELLI
THE QUINTET OF THE HOT CLUB OF FRANCE
PEARL, 1933

Europe's premier '30s jazz act. "It's really exciting: Skill mixed with gypsy charm, vagabond nature. They didn't like each other at all, but together they were a hell of a lot more than the sum of their parts." **JONAH WEINER**



The Libertines, clockwise
from top left: John
Hassall, Gary Powell,
Pete Doherty, Carl Barât

MARC ANTHONY

AMAR SIN MENTIRAS ★★

SONY DISCOS

He has starred on Broadway and recorded for a decade — but now the world knows him as Mr. Jennifer Lopez

Not since the runaway hit telenovela *El Clon* has there been such a juicy plot: Marc Anthony, a New York salsa superstar and actor of Puerto Rican heritage, dumps Miss Universe for Jennifer Lopez and records the song "Escapémonos" ("Let's Escape") with his soon-to-be-bride. Produced and largely written by

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

GOOD IN ITS GENRE

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

hitmaker Estefano (Paulina Rubio, Ricky Martin), the songs have familiar radio-ready hooks with *amor* in just about every chorus. The sappy Lopez collaboration mimics the dramatic honey-coated male-female Latin ballads from decades past, while Anthony's exquisite revival of the melancholy "Amigo," a '70s hit by Brazilian balladeer Roberto Carlos, gilds the album with class. Save for two percussive songs, Anthony turns away from danceable music — not a hint of salsa here — for cosmopolitan Latin pop. With all the lyrics about heartbreak, desire and passionate acquiescence, this one's for the *mamis*.

ENRIQUE LAVIN

DOWNLOAD THIS "Amigo"

AUTHORITY ZERO

ANDIAMO ★★

LAVA

On their second album, rising Arizona rockers are pro-voting, antiwar

Some punks break things: hotel rooms, other punks' faces, the rules. Others — such as Authority Zero — believe that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. On their second album, *Andiamo* (Italian for *let's go*), the quartet tread familiar mohawked ground: simple, stomping rhythms, gruff barks, spaghetti-Western guitar and a pleasantly proletarian approach to choruses (e.g., "Retreat! Your sticky

situation! Retreat! Without any hesitation! Retreat!" — from, of course, "Retreat"). They're also unapologetically political, as demonstrated by the rabble-rousing "Revolution" and "A Thousand Year War" and their involvement in NOFX's recent Punk Voter tours. Only an occasional detour into sloppy ska and the requisite '80s cover (Wall of Voodoo's novelty "Mexican Radio") disappoint. In its current major-label phase, punk has become so overrun with Hot Topic models, crybabies and Canadians that familiarity can be a welcome surprise.

ANDY GREENWALD

DOWNLOAD THESE "Revolution," "Find Your Way"

BADLY DRAWN BOY

ONE PLUS ONE IS ONE ★★

ASTRALWERKS

No longer California dreaming, English folkie discovers flute solos

Following up the bombastic, L.A.-recorded *Have You Fed the Fish?* from two years ago, Badly Drawn Boy — a.k.a. English slacker-folkie Damon Gough — returns to his lo-fi roots (the album's first line: "Back to being who I was before"). *One Plus One Is One* revives the scruffy intimacy of BDB's debut, *The Hour of Bewilderbeast*, but it's far from minimal. Get past the



Badly Drawn Boy:
Underneath the hat?
Another, older hat!

sometimes cloying pastoral arrangements and the often cornball sentiments and there are moments of ragged glory, as on the pithy Elliott Smith ringer "Fewer Words" and the improbable sing-song epic "Year of the Rat." Gough tends to overestimate the average listener's tolerance for flutes, glockenspiels and children's choirs, but at least he's living up to his moniker and coloring outside the lines again.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD THESE "Year of the Rat," "Fewer Words"

THE BEATNUTS

MILK ME ★★

PENALTY

Queens rap purists craft better bass lines than punch lines

Raunchy hip-hop jokesters Psycho Les and Junkyard Juju call themselves the Beatnuts, but the Queens, New York, b-boys never engage in masturba- ➔

THUG SUMMIT

Snoop Dogg and his childhood pals strut through a reunion set

213

THE HARD WAY ★★

TVT

IN THE LATE '80s, three Long Beach, California, teens named Calvin Broadus, Warren Griffin and Nate Hale formed a rap crew called 213, honing their skills in a tool shed and performing at Crips parties — but they never made a record.

First, Broadus was imprisoned for coke possession. After his release, Dr. Dre recruited the charismatic young pup for *The Chronic* on the strength of a demo: Calling himself Snoop Dogg, his cuddly menace made him a superstar, and 213 was put on indefinite hold. Soon, Warren G went platinum on his own and Nate Dogg became hip-hop's most dependable chorus outsourcer, delivering radio-ready hooks to everyone from Ludacris to Fabolous to Jadakiss.

More than 10 years after they formed, 213 make their reunion and their debut. Several tracks here feature the cruise-control rhythms and smooth production gloss of vintage G-funk, but this isn't just a recycling project. "213 da Gangsta Clipp" is a deft

mix of robotic rat-squeaks and spare synth squelch, with Nate Dogg's silky baritone adding a touch of gangsta finesse. "My Dirty Ho" is built around a comically somber gospel chorus ("Myyy dirty ho-oooo/Scandalous ho-ooooo!") that would sound at home in a Broadway musical.

Shuffling syllables with the nonchalance of a three-card monte dealer, Snoop sounds great without saying anything he hasn't already said many times: He's a hustler, he's a pimp, he don't love them ho's. Which is a testament to his abilities, but it's a bit disappointing, too. In interviews about his movie career, Snoop often says he'd like to play more challenging characters. Here, though, he typecasts himself into a pimp-cup-toting caricature, and the role's getting a bit old. **G BEATO**

DOWNLOAD THESE "My Dirty Ho," "213 da Gangsta Clipp"

NATE DOGG'S CURRENT LISTENING

THE WHISPERS
GREATEST HITS
CAPITOL

LUTHER VANDROSS
GREATEST HITS
EPIC



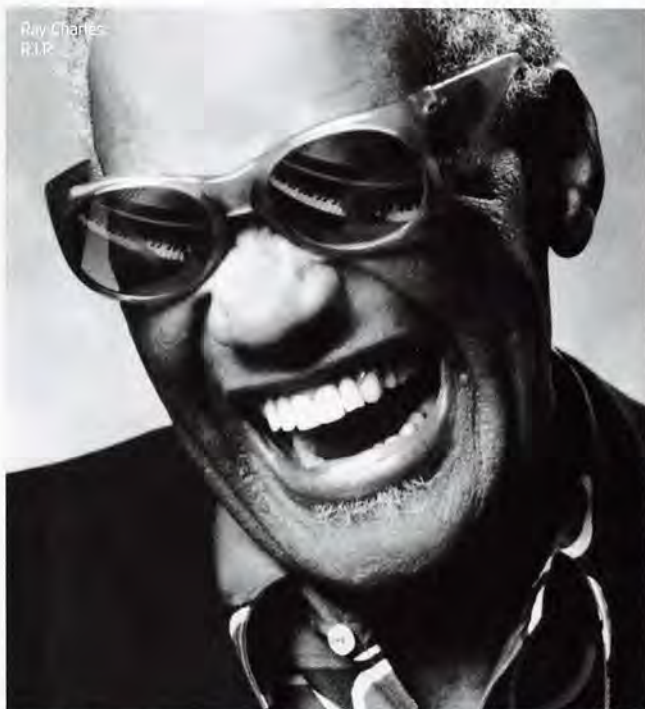
SNOOP SOUNDS
GREAT — WITHOUT
SAYING ANYTHING NEW.

From top: Bill Green, Anthony Mandler



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A LAST LAUGH

Duetting fans like Norah Jones help Brother Ray go out in style

RAY CHARLES

GENIUS LOVES COMPANY
★★★

CONCORD

THE LATE RAY CHARLES'S 2002 record *Thanks for Bringing Love Around Again* was the weakest album of a career that generated its share of dross. His daunting vitality appeared to have evaporated, probably because at 72, he was already ailing. So be thankful his farewell CD, 12 duets with a few of his admirers, is his strongest collection since the '70s.

Thank especially producer John Burk. Not only do Burk's sleek, snappy arrangements deliver Charles from the massed strings and choral excesses he can no longer overwhelm; they also bring him into the present more effectively than the hesitant synths of Richard Perry and Jean-Pierre Gosz did in the '90s. The tasteful traditionalism Burk favors can be pretty bland when applied to run-of-the-mill pop-jazz troupers. But Charles was never run-of-the-mill, and so he sounds like his old self — only older.

Thank Charles, too — for focusing his savvy and wit on what he must have figured would be his farewell. Would that Frank Sinatra had

lavished as much intelligence on his phoned-in *Duets* and *Duets II*. And thank Charles's stellar partners, all save Norah Jones and Diana Krall past their commercial primes, but most in excellent voice (let's hope Willie Nelson was having a bad day).

Charles no longer had the stuff to dig new veins of color and power out of his thorax. But with such fans as Natalie Cole, Gladys Knight, Bonnie Raitt, James Taylor and Van Morrison spurring and covering for him, he husbands his diminished color and power with grace, humor and, you bet, soul.

HIS STRONGEST COLLECTION SINCE THE '70s.

A few familiar titles sound better the second time around, including the well-loved "You Don't Know Me," redone with Krall. And at least two — the sly R&B classic "Fever," with Cole, and the spontaneously interactive "Crazy Love," with Morrison, who wrote it — will stand high in Charles's canon even after he isn't the most influential pop singer of his age.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD THESE "Fever," "Crazy Love"

LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE!

JOHN LEE HOOKER
THE BEST OF FRIENDS POINTBLANK

JOHNNY ADAMS ROOM WITH A VIEW OF THE BLUES ROUNDER

tory excess. Instead, these producers-turned-rappers crank out efficient, no-nonsense dance-floor fare — never less, sometimes more — on their seventh full-length release, moving from old-school hip-hop tributes ("Buggin") to slithery G-funk ("Madness") to robotic two-step ("We Don't Give a Funk"). In their best production moments (see "Find Us," in which they pair Diwali dancehall hand-claps with a single repeated guitar chord, miraculously creating a hook with a doo-wop vibe), they breathe new life into the familiar. Lyrically, however, it's a different story: The pair traffic in dull rhymes about big-assed shorties and paper-chasing, providing the best argument that these guys should stick to ProTools and leave the mics to more capable hands.

G. BEATO

DOWNLOAD THESE "Find Us," "Buggin"

BEEP BEEP

BUSINESS CASUAL ★★★

SADDLE CREEK

On their first album, *Nebraska New Wave* punks arrange scary songs about water coolers and school plays

This debuting quartet hail from Omaha, Nebraska's reconstituted world of New Wave, a gung-ho realm where the Faint's dark electronicism is as big as Duran Duran was in 1984 and pop music proceeds as though the '90s never happened. For Beep Beep, New Wave means not zippy synth-pop but the brute force of '70s punk turned into screwed-up yet finely calibrated outbursts. Eric Bemberger and Chris Hughes trade off vocals and guitars, constructing songs as off-kilter clashes between fleet metallic riffs and singing unable to restrict itself to notes; they're more into plain old whooping. On songs the band accurately label "tantrums," such as "I Am the Secretary" and "Misuse Their Bodies," Beep Beep scream and yell brilliantly. Their trash-compacted lyrics about sex, nature and white-collar manners float comfortably through supermusical, albeit slightly mad, audio mélange.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Misuse Their Bodies," "Electronic Wolves"

BY DIVINE RIGHT

SWEET CONFUSION ★★★

LINUS/SPINART

Peppy Canadians look for love, flaunt dirty guitars on their fifth album

By Divine Right celebrate the strum-and-clang of New York City guitar bands from the Velvet Underground to the Strokes — but they never finished

reading the rulebook on downtown cool. Throughout this set, Chilean-born frontman Jose Miguel Contreras is breathless, excitable and more than a little needy, on the hunt for a serious hug (and whatever else it might lead to). Riding a furious groove on "The Slap," he exclaims, "All I need is a big wet kiss!"; on the caffeinated title track he purrs, "Set the controls for the love, love, love." "Semi White Boy" features earthquake drums and a small existential crisis, but then it's right back to spiky riffs and inexhaustible optimism. The cool kids might scoff at Contreras's earnestness, but the sex-starved romantics know what he's on about.

JON YOUNG

DOWNLOAD THESE "Sweet Confusion," "Semi White Boy," "The Slap"

CLINIC

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

★★★

UNIVERSAL

Liverpudlian creep-rockers are never seen without surgical masks. Are they Radiohead in disguise, or just ugly?

In 2003's art-house jailbait movie *Thirteen*, the woozy, obligatory bad-girl-takes-Ecstasy scene is brilliantly soundtracked by a grinding garage-rock beat and spooky two-note melodic riff.

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

When he was 19, CLINIC singer Ade Blackburn was a professional pike fisherman in the Liverpool-to-Leeds canal in England.

This was "The Equaliser" by Clinic, the warmup act on Radiohead's *Kid A* tour and — by dint of never showing their faces in photos — a kind of indie Residents.

Their third album, following 2002's Grammy-nominated *Walking With Thee*, offers more of singer Ade Blackburn's creepy wheedling and the band's primitive sci-fi soundscapes — imagine the Ventures sealed forever in a concrete bunker with Peter Lorre forever. "WDYB" punks like crazy, "Falstaff" delivers mellow doo-wop weirdness and "The Majestic #2" gives wobbly bad-trip vibes — all very beguiling as long as you really, really like the sound of a melodic.

TONY POWER

DOWNLOAD THESE "WDYB," "The Majestic #2" →

I LOVE THIS CD!



MACAULAY CULKIN
ACTOR IN SAVED!

I LOVE THIS CD!



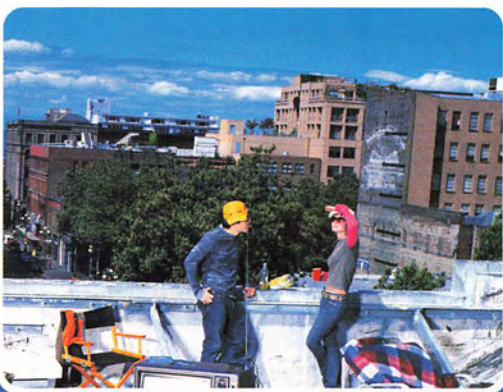
THE STROKES
ROOM ON FIRE
RCA

"I'm one of those people who enjoyed it. The first line is 'I want to be forgotten.' The idea of getting too famous is something I found appealing."

***YOU PLAY.
YOU DIE.
YOU RESET***

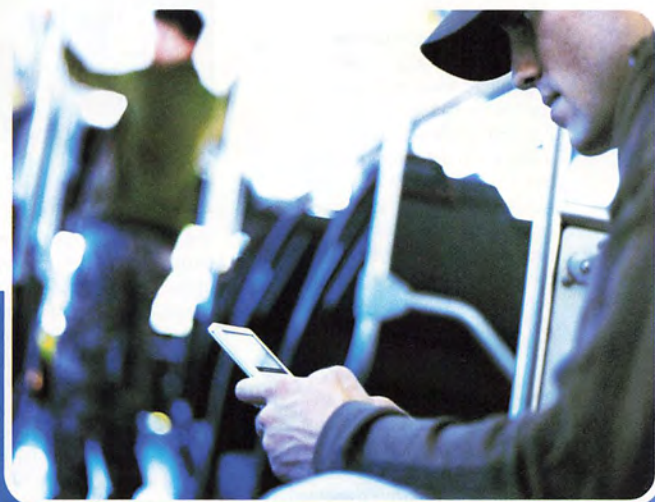


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GAME BOY ADVANCE SP



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The Hellacopters: "And we're sure it's spelled 'hellacopters'?"

STEVE EARLE

THE REVOLUTION STARTS... NOW ★★★

ARTEMIS

Virginia-born gadfly, 49, returns patriotism to its first meaning: questioning authority

Politics light up Steve Earle's senses and make him come alive: In his current role as pointed critic of the Bush administration and the Iraq war, his voice attains the warm, droning growl of a dog about to strike, and self-assurance flows out of him. *The Revolution Starts... Now* extends his delight in occupying the strangely wide-open territory of protest rock. He's more vehement than ever before, and the music feels rag-and-bone honest. Vignettes from a regular guy's point of view — "Rich Man's War" and "Home to Houston" — still represent his best literary trick, but there's a bitterly funny mock calypso called "Condi, Condi" about our National Security Adviser, and a few hard-Stones anthemic stomps (the title track as well as "F the CC," not so much a screed against Michael Powell as a salute to political resistance of all kinds). None of these unflashy songs sticks in your head for long. But they all have something in common with the news channels Earle probably glues himself to: They're more useful than polished meditations.

BEN RATLIFF

DOWNLOAD THESE "F the CC," "The Revolution Starts Now," "Condi, Condi"

THE FUCKING AM

GOLD ★★★

DRAG CITY

Indie ironists throw '80s metal party

Ignore the macho band names — indie instrumental trios the Fucking Champs



Har Mar Superstar owns no mirrors.

and Trans Am are powerhouses, but they're goofballs first and foremost. The former hustle '80s speed-metal full of twin-guitar attacks, while the latter rip through synth-pop, Krautrock and punk like a skipping iPod. Here they join forces for one big prog-rock smackeroo, supersizing every riff to the point of parody — think the Darkness, only without the castrati. It's fun without being foolish, but on the trilogy "Acoustico Gomez," "Elastic Gomez" and "Electrico Gomez" (the same song in metal, acoustic and electro incarnations) — they stop trainspotting and make something totally their own.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD THESE "Bad Leg," "Powerpoint," "Elastic Gomez"

THE GOOD LIFE

ALBUM OF THE YEAR ★★★

SADDLE CREEK

Conor Oberst's Nebraska homey puts himself in the running for Bard of Ex-Boyfriends

Unless you've broken his heart, you're probably not Tim Kasher's intended audience. On his third proper album as

the Good Life, the man who also fronts emo-artsof Cursive wryly vents about failed relationships, betraying as many fond memories as bitter feelings. The songs here are stark but buoyant — usually little more than acoustic guitar, hand drums and Kasher's yelped narratives. On "Lovers Need Lawyers," as dramatic and bouncy as musical theater, he denies accusations of cheating; on the ghostly ballad "October Leaves," he ticks off the details of a cooling romance: "Your hips have this way of saying 'No way.'" Meanwhile, on the jaunty, slow-build title track, he recalls meeting a lover while throwing up in the ladies' room. Listening to these tales of failing relationships feels like eavesdropping, but it's irresistible.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THESE "Album of the Year," "Lovers Need Lawyers"

HAR MAR SUPERSTAR

THE HANDLER ★★★

RECORD COLLECTION

Tubby Angelino, beloved by the Strokes, who strips down to his undies and socks onstage



A vocal chameleon who does note-perfect imitations of everyone from Usher to Mary J. Blige, Har Mar Superstar wittily riffs on a dozen styles of black pop, past and present, on his third album. The joke, though, is that this high-strutting, panty-soaking love god (Sean Tillman, age 26) is a pasty white guy with a mullet and a beer gut. He's got some solid grooves, especially the juicy G-funk of the Missy Elliott tribute "Back That Camel Up," but a lot of them are borrowed ("Sugar Pie," in particular, is a near-clone of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely"). And if you don't know why Har Mar Superstar's souled-up cover of Gilbert O'Sullivan's 1972 self-pity ballad "Alone Again (Naturally)" is a dubious gesture at best, Google O'Sullivan's lawsuit against Biz Markie, which set up the hurdle that limits hip-hop sampling.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE "Sugar Pie," "Bird in the Hand"

THE HELLACOPTERS

BY THE GRACE OF GOD ★★★

LIQUOR & POKER

Scandinavian longhairs fly the flag for classic rock

In the 1980s, it seemed that for every homegrown hair-metal band there was a Scandinavian doppelgänger as skilled in machine-tooled heavy pop as the Americans they adored. Forgotten acts such as Treat and Stage Dolls barely registered anywhere outside their own backyards, but 10 years since forming, Sweden's Hellacopters are still throwing

the devil's horns high. *By the Grace of God* has the same familiar ring as the group's last three albums, as if the boulder-size riffs and mile-wide choruses of "Carry Me Home" and "Rainy Days Revisited" had been written with a classic-rock radio programmer in mind. Never contrived, though, their joyous celebration of Aerosmith and Thin Lizzy's hairy-guy rock is free of irony but irreverent, too. Ripping and roaring, this is fun for its own sake.

DANIEL KRAUSS

DOWNLOAD THESE "By the Grace of God," "Carry Me Home," "Rainy Days Revisited"

DOUG HILSINGER WITH CAROLEEN BEATTY

TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY) ★★★

DBK WORKS

Obscure San Franciscan covers Brian Eno's 1974 art-pop masterwork; even grumpy Eno calls it "beautiful"

Doug Hilsinger has played in a handful of Bay Area tribute bands (including the Cinammon Girls, who cover Neil Young), but this CD is an act of extreme, targeted devotion: a densely orchestrated cover of a Brian Eno album, on which Hilsinger plays virtually all the instruments himself (and Caroleen Beatty sings). He eschews the original album's keyboards and drum machines in order to cram the mix with guitars, glockenspiels, sitars and everything else within reach. His only major departure from Eno's arrangements is a version of "Third Uncle" slowed to a Motown-inspired bounce; these are respectful treatments, even if Eno's experimental spirit calls for a bit more disrespect. But Hilsinger and Beatty are clearly having fun here: They extend most of these songs, just to revel a little while longer in their strangeness.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE "Third Uncle," "The Great Pretender"

HOUSTON

IT'S ALREADY WRITTEN ★★

CAPITOL

L.A.-based R&B boy who debuted his single in a McDonald's ad is no Houston rocket

Some R&B thugs sell personality; others peddle fantasy. In the case of Houston, neither one's an option. The 19-year-old would-be lothario is short on vocal range — which is not in itself an unforgivable crime — but shorter still on the Dionysian production blasts that would mask that flaw. Ballads like "Let Me Love You Down" drag their heels something terrible, and the club tracks throughout are merely cluttered. He's even charmless on his breakout hit, "I Like That," a song redeemed by squelchy synths and Urkel-voiced

Kool Keith and
Kutmasta Kurt:
Brought to you by the
letter... you know.



Chingy, of all people. Instead, Houston's idea of progress is coining the word *twizala*, to describe a girl who has him "wrapped up all in her lovin'." And when he bites the R. Kelly template ("Keep It on the Low"), he demonstrates that a young boy can't always fill a grown man's boots.

JON CARAMANICA
DOWNLOAD THIS "I Like That"

JADAKISS

KISS OF DEATH ★★★★★

RUFF RYDERS/INTERSCOPE

One of hip-hop's most vicious
battlers records his finest album yet

With Biggie dead, Jay-Z "retired" and 50 Cent and Nas holed up in their studios, it's a ripe moment for Jadakiss, the would-be king of New York. Since 1998, the longtime member of the Lox and the Ruff Ryders has been better suited to crews and cameos than solo stardom — when he and Jay-Z teetered on the verge of a feud three years back, there was little doubt who would come out on top. On his second solo LP, though, Jadakiss has grown into a terrific MC: In a voice that perfectly balances plushness and grit, he reels off threats and insults, navigates thickets of internal rhymes and boasts about everything from his stock portfolio to his strategy for avoiding incarceration ("I'm a goddamned raging bull," he raps on the jaunty "Bring You Down," "stay out of jail by just telling myself the cage is full"). *Kiss of Death* isn't watertight, but it's packed with inventive beats by Kanye West, the Neptunes and Red Spyda (whose fierce snare-and-bass loop propels the title track), and Jadakiss's flow is impeccable throughout. Another record like this

one just might be what it takes to lure Jay-Z out of retirement.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD THESE "Bring You Down,"
"Gettin' It In," "Kiss of Death"

KOOL KEITH AND KUTMASTA KURT

DIESEL TRUCKERS ★★★★★

THRESHOLD/FUNKY-ASS/DMAFT

Rap's finest oddball shouts out
Krispy Kremes and interplanetary
18-wheelers

Since 1996, Kool Keith has rapped about time-traveling gynecologists, copulating with orangutans and — every chance he gets — urinating on wack MCs' hair. He's built this cheeky album around a big-rig theme — is it a satire of rappers' SUV obsessions or just an idea that edged out the voices in his head for a second? Probably both. But *Diesel Truckers* isn't a typical Keith affair — for starters, some of it actually makes sense. Teamed up with producer Kutmasta Kurt's chunky, sample-based funk, Keith tones down his obscure non sequiturs in favor of more direct tales of rest-stop booty calls ("Can I Buy U a Drink?"), girls who "taste like Krispy Krems" ("Break U Off") and →

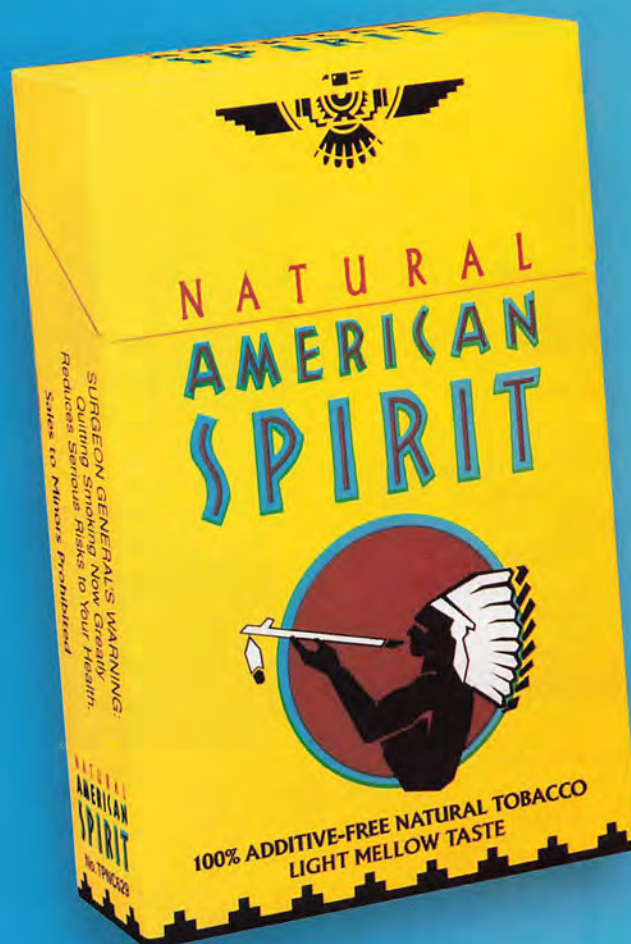
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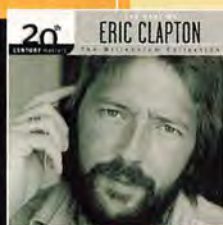
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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

general old-school boosterism ("Takin' It Back"). But lest Keith grow too straightforward, there's the fantastic album closer, "Kenworths With Wings," wherein his 18-wheeler sprouts wings, floats toward outer space and quite literally takes it to the next level.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD THESE "Kenworths With Wings," "Game"

LISA LOEB

THE WAY IT REALLY IS ★★★

ZOE/ROUNDER

Bespectacled singer-songwriter proves that lousy relationships can make for great music

Ten years ago, Lisa Loeb's first single, "Stay," went to number 1 with a memorable video in which she wandered around a loft telling off her two-timing boyfriend. Since then, her best songs ("Do You Sleep?", from her 1995 debut, *Tails*, or "I Do," from 1997's *Firecracker*) have involved her getting pissed off at some guy, while her albums were handicapped by dorm-room confessionals. On the back side of a breakup, she suddenly sounds in control: "I Control the Sun," the best song she's ever written, is a devastating kiss-off to another lying man, fueled by upbeat guitars that invoke New Wave and the Beatles. Despite cheeseball guitar solos by her ex Dweezil Zappa (probably the weasel who made her so mad), the album is full of life and energy. "Fools Like Me," the first single, makes dumping a cheating guy sound like an act of empowerment, and "Probably" uses glorious harmonies to obscure the fact that she'd probably take him back anyway. Let's hope her next boyfriend keeps her frustrated, too.

JACK HAYES

DOWNLOAD THESE "I Control the Sun," "Probably"

MARIA MENA

WHITE TURNS BLUE ★★

COLUMBIA

Norwegian singer-songwriter, 18, sulks about her parents' divorce, insulting a boyfriend's cock size

The title hints that this Scandinavian singer is doing northern soul, but her lead single, "You're the Only One," is the sound of a literate folk-punk avenging Ani DiFranco. The rest of Maria Mena's American debut ascends or plummets (depending on your tastes) into more of a Natalie Imbruglia-with-attitude stance, taking the singer and everyone else on a vexed voyage through Valium-infested waters. This girl just wants to have very little fun, as long as you have even less. And yet, as derivative as it is, something about the record's lurid

laments appeals; there's a sense, as on "Just a Little Bit," that everything's just glossy enough to work out OK, given four minutes and some flash clothes. She's a girl with a problem, but nothing that couldn't be solved over the course of a well-made video.

RENE VIENET

DOWNLOAD THIS "You're the Only One"

TIFT MERRITT

TAMBOURINE ★★

LOST HIGHWAY

Singer, 29, loses the focus of her stellar country-heartache debut

The record industry's dream alt-country newcomer writes like Emmylou Harris, sings with Patty Griffin's grace, communicates hurt in Lucinda Williams's sullen earth tones and, not incidentally, could make the semis on *America's Next Top Model*. Having proved all this on her lovely 2002 debut, *Bramble Rose*, Tift Merritt strives to differentiate herself — by writing sturdy (and bland) anthems built on overused U2 chords and several barnstorming R&B vamps notable for throwback horn riffs and Aretha Franklin-style backing vocals. While the North Carolina native brings a winsome frailty to her ballads (particularly "Plainest Thing," easily the loveliest song here), she more often musters Mack truck-size lung power: On the stilted, slightly funky "Your Love Made a U-Turn," Merritt sings like she can recapture her man's straying heart just by blowing enough wind through the microphone.

TOM MOON

DOWNLOAD THESE "Plainest Thing," "Write My Ticket"

MIDTOWN

FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW ★★★

COLUMBIA

The gospel according to emo kids: God is dead, but guitar gods are still alive and well

Midtown frontman Gabe Saporta spews bile about the universe's plastic people — everyone around him seems to be one of them — all over his band's third record. →

I LOVE THIS CD!



BROOKE BURKE
ACTRESS IN
NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND 2



NORAH JONES
FEELS LIKE HOME
BLUE NOTE

"It's just really sexy, groovy music. I do a lot of entertaining at home, and Norah Jones is great for parties."



Drive-By Truckers:
"Yup," "Yup," "Yup,"
"Uh-huh," "Yup."

SOUTHERN MAN

Down-home rockers question their Dixie masculinity

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

THE DIRTY SOUTH ★★☆☆

NEW WEST

THE 1977 PLANE CRASH that snuffed Lynyrd Skynyrd, Southern rock's greatest band, also seemed to douse Southern pride; the next generation of Dixie musicians, such as Tom Petty, forsook their daddies' slide guitars and imitated Brits, and in their

hurry to assimilate, they couldn't move to California fast enough. As Confederate flags disappeared from album covers, only rappers were left to celebrate life in Dixie. Drive-By Truckers, Southern rock's greatest living band, take the title of their fifth studio album from the hip-hop phrase that toasts the region, but for the Truckers, the South isn't a land of stripper poles and sipping sizzurp.

Instead, their homeland is full of poverty, guns, jail, whores, cursing and death; add some corpse-eating pigs, and you'd have an episode of *Deadwood*. Last year, the Truckers began their great album *Decoration Day* with songs about incest and tornadoes, and they start this slightly less great follow-up with songs about moonshine and tornadoes — the trio of singing guitarists (Patterson Hood, Jason Isbell and Mike Cooley, ranked in order of vocal assurance) play with Southern stereotypes the way rappers play with African-

American stereotypes.

If a northerner wrote these songs, he'd be lynched at the Mason-Dixon line. But the Truckers, as backwoods philosophers, want to figure out where masculinity goes wrong and leads straight to jail. They're obsessed with their daddies, with the past and with myths of virility. In one sequence, Cooley sings about addiction and brotherhood among the founding fathers of rock ("Carl Perkins' Cadillac"), Hood connects World

War II to John Wayne ("The Sands of Iwo Jima") and Isbell follows with the lovely ballad "Danko/Manuel," speculating sympathetically about the debauched

deaths of two '60s musicians.

These rough, bitter, ruminative songs are slower, longer and wordier than those on *Decoration Day*, with fewer unshakeable riffs, though "Lookout Mountain," a Neil Young-style stomper with guitars that reek of petrol, is gloriously cathartic. After so many traumas, the narratives feel predictable: When the unemployed narrator in "Puttin' People on the Moon" starts dealing drugs to pay the rent, you know his story won't end happily. Bring on the corpse-eating pigs.

ROB TANNENBAUM

DOWNLOAD THESE "Lookout Mountain," "Danko/Manuel," "Boys From Alabama"

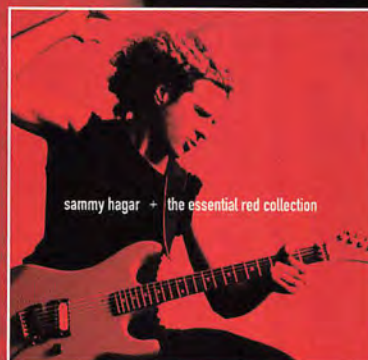
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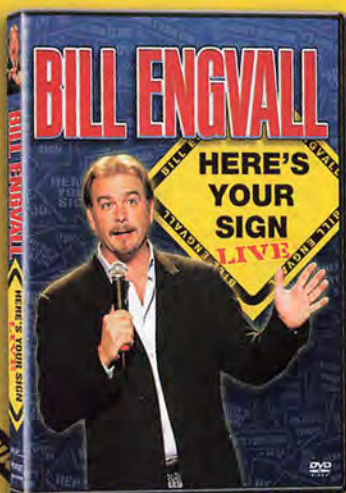
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Thankfully, though, this New Jersey quartet isn't a total downer; sprinkled on top of its by-the-numbers pogo strut are meaty, showboating licks tailor-made for inclusion in the "Sad Guys Rock!" issue of *Guitar Player*. Forget *What You Know* misfires only when it slows down and their peppy embrace of nihilism and nothingness stops pogoing. It's an instructive dichotomy: Remember, no matter how cute the boy toting around that dog-eared copy of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* might be, hanging out with his guitarist friend will always be more fun.

MAURA JOHNSTON

DOWNLOAD THESE "To Our Savior," "Hey Baby, Don't You Know That We're All Whores"

MIS-TEEQ

MIS-TEEQ ★★

REPRISE

Predictions that these British b-girls will be the next Destiny's Child are sorely mis-taken

The ladies of hip-hop/R&B trio Mis-Teeq are superstars in England, with a mantel of Brit Awards (the U.K.'s version of the Grammys) and a slew of Top 10 hits. But American ears are likely to wonder what all the fuss is about. Unlike fellow London garage-scene vets Dizze Rascal and the Streets, who have won over U.S. listeners by incorporating British eccentricities into their music, Mis-Teeq are all too eager to sound like they were born in the Bronx. This works for exactly one song: the terrific lead single, "Scandalous," with its sultry harmonies and Dr. Dre-style strings. Everything else is just copycat beats, faux-ghetto posturing and rhymes that are years behind the curve. ("I know you're down with O.P.P.?" What is this, *I Love the '90s*?) "It's a U.K. thing," Mis-Teeq boast on one track. For the U.K.'s sake, let's hope they're wrong.

JOSH EELLS

DOWNLOAD THIS "Scandalous"

NORTHERN STATE

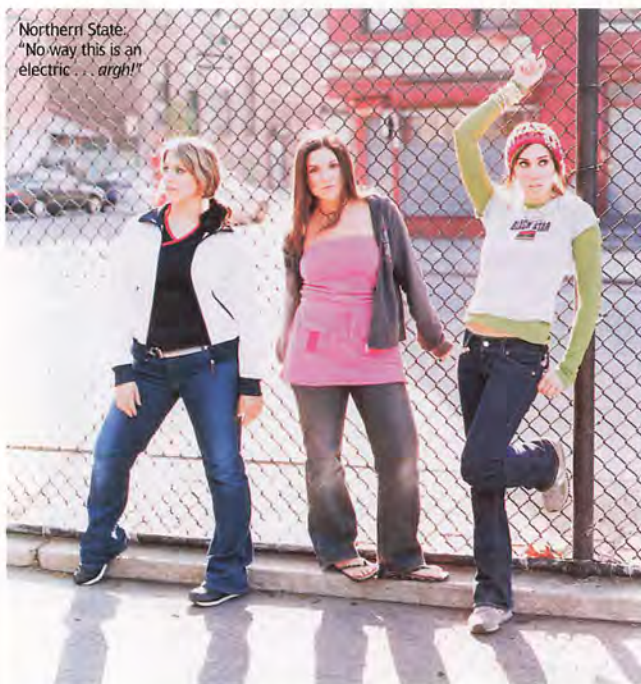
ALL CITY ★★

COLUMBIA

With their major-label debut, Long Island white girls haven't shaken their Mike D fixation

The hip-hop trio Northern State aren't subtle about their aspirations: With their old-school overlapping raps, squeaky-shrill vocal stylings, lyrics that name-drop everyone from Chiang Kai-shek to "your grandma in Boca Raton" and scrupulously inspirational messages, they wish nothing more than to be Beastie Girls. That's a noble mission—but is it feasible? The Beasties' filsiest rhymes (and most self-righteous political rants) are redeemed by goofy abandon, and goofy abandon is not something you can sample and loop. *All City* features tasty tracks from DJ

Northern State:
"No way this is an electric... argh!"



Muggs, Questlove of the Roots and Pete Rock, but only on the album-closing "Summer Never Ends," a groovy, percolating party tune with guest vocals by the irrepressible Har Mar Superstar, do the gals sound like they're relaxed and doing their own thing—not trying to make *Paula's Boutique*.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD THESE "Summer Never Ends," "Ignite"

PALOMAR

PALOMAR III: REVENGE OF PALOMAR ★★

RCB

Mostly female Brooklyn quartet bait their hooks with wry wisdom

Palomar (three girls and one guy, all of whom are barely old enough to drink) predate the NYC retro-rock typhoon, and they're not really part of it: Despite the acute geometry of their guitar lines and the familiar thrum of tunes such as "The Planeiac," the group's happy harmonies are inviting rather than hipper-than-thou, and songwriter Rachel Warren's lyrics are wholly unpretentious even when they're abstract. Their third record is a step back from the galloping pep that characterized *Palomar II*, less like a runaway crush than a clear-eyed appraisal of disappointing friends ("Liquor Store"), unpicky pickup artists ("Underwater") and the creeping fear that day jobs might last forever ("Work Is a State Function"). The songs are just as catchy as their predecessors, though—endearing and smart but confident enough not to beg for affection.

JOHN DIFORE

DOWNLOAD THESE "The Planeiac," "Albacore"

PHOENIX

ALPHABETICAL ★★

ASTRALWERKS

Mystical Parisians go their own way

Before Air became America's favorite French duo, Phoenix were their backing band. So when the former indie punks from the Paris suburbs debuted with 2000's *United*, the surprise was that they sounded neither particularly electronic nor French—singer Thomas Mars, who might have hailed from L.A. or London, had the uncanny ability to sing feverishly and tenderly in English. *Alphabetical*, coming after the quartet's dazzling single "Too Young" fired the karaoke scene in *Lost in Translation*, extends the band's blurring of '70s pop-rock intimacy and warm rhythms. From "Everything Is Everything"—which jumps with the acoustic sparkle of A1M radio—to more contemplative ballads such as "(You Can't Blame It On) Anybody," these songs create a series of vivid but minimal soundscapes.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Everything Is Everything," "(You Can't Blame It On) Anybody"

PITBULL

M.I.A.M.I. ★★

TVT

Little Havana MC is crunk with Lil Jon, sunk without him

Does the sun ever set on Lil Jon's empire of crunk? The Atlanta native marches south to Miami with his production work for Pitbull, the first Spanglish-spitting Cuban rapper since Mellow Man Ace. "Get Krunk" is self-explanatory, and "Culo," a frenetic

bilingual ode to backsides, employs the same can't-miss clip-clap dancehall riddim (Coolie Dance) already used to great effect by Elephant Man and Nina Sky. Sans Jon, though, Pitbull's low on bark — nimble but dull. Guest Trick Daddy enlivens his half of "Melting Pot" but can't save the rest. The same goes for Wyclef Jean's Caribbean connection on "Jungle Fever." *M.I.A.M.I.* is momentarily redeemed on another Jon production, "Get on the Dance Floor," a vicious electro-bass track so sweaty that all Pitbull needs to do is growl and holler. As his name might indicate, that's the range of his skill set.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD THESE "Culo," "Get on the Dance Floor"

RADIO 4

STEALING OF A NATION ★★

ASTRALWERKS

On third album, NYC hipsters can't sit still long enough to write a song

Radio 4 have always been a little too eager to be fashionable. Spinning through emo, funk and death-disco influences like a kid let loose in a costume shop, they often sound like indie-rock carpetbaggers — here, there's scarcely an unrecycled groove, and their droning, lazy melodies don't help. The first half of *Stealing of a*

Nation carefully but unenthusiastically photocopies the post-punk party vibe of the Rapture: mechanical dance beats, conga fills, twitch-and-scrape guitars. Later on, their sources get a bit more varied — "Absolute Affirmation" is a close relative of the Strokes' "Hard to Explain" — but INXS-adoring singer Anthony Roman's politically spiked lyrics sound shrugged-off and flimsy. If the band doesn't even seem to put their hearts in it, why should we?

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THIS "Party Crashers"

SALIVA

SURVIVAL OF THE SICKEST ★★

ISLAND

Tennessee titans declare love for Lynyrd Skynyrd, hate for the Dixie Chicks. How manly!

Two years ago, Saliva catapulted from B-list rap-rockers ("Click Click Boom") to A-list grunge revivalists ("Always"), avoiding the nu-metal backlash in time for frontman Josey Scott to piggyback on Chad Kroeger's *Spider-Man* megahit "Hero." Here, the Memphis fivesome temper their mid-tempo crunch with '80s-metal guitar heroics and Southern-rock fundamentalism. They're at their best polishing nickel-plated tropes until they shine like platinum, whether it's Scott's rheumy-eyed, Skynyrd-esque good-ol'-boy blues on "Razor's Edge" or their shit-kicker's anthem "Survival of the Sickest," which crams nods to Marilyn Manson, Kiss and the Rolling Stones into a redneck riposte to Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know." But Scott's return to his down-home roots brings out the worst in him: When he insults emo kids ("All you do is whine") and the "Dixie Chickens," he sounds more reactionary than revolutionary.

CARLY CARIOLI

DOWNLOAD THESE "Survival of the Sickest," "One Night Only"

SASHA

INVOLVER ★★★

GLOBAL UNDERGROUND

British DJ hero heads for the chill-out room on latest mix set

Alexander "Sasha" Coe has long been an A-list DJ and an in-demand remixer for Madonna and Orbital. Here, he combines the two roles, custom-remixing 10 recent electronica tracks and then merging them into a seamless whole. Too seamless, in fact — Sasha's production style is like saran wrap, rendering each track shiny, hygienic and somewhat indistinct. Like his last studio album, *Airdrawn dagger* (2002), *Involver* dissolves too quickly into the pleasant hum of background music, and it comes to life only when his source material has enough personality. Felix da Housecat's "Watching Cars Go By" retains its rude metallic throb, while Ulrich Schnauss's epic "On My Own" sounds like My Bloody Valentine filling a stadium. Even chill-out needs drama.

DORIAN LYNSEY

DOWNLOAD THIS Ulrich Schnauss, "On My Own"

TODD SNIDER

EAST NASHVILLE SKYLINE

★★★★

OH BOY

A hillbilly Michael Moore could love

Todd Snider admits he's a "tree-hugging, peace-loving, pot-smoking, porn-watching lazy-ass," and a listen to *East Nashville Skyline* nearly brings the bong smells to life. But he's more than just that; Snider is a Southern songwriter in a Steve Earle vein who writes incredibly knowing songs about rambling and debauchery, Hank Williams and Marilyn Manson. On his seventh album, he's a folkie yearning to rock out, and whether he's working in the familiar genre of the railroad tune ("Play a Train Song") or the unknown genre of Mike Tyson songs ("Iron Mike's Main Man's Last Request"), he never gives up on an idea — even when it seems like maybe he should. Slack and funny, he sounds like a great guy to hang with, though maybe you'd better hold the wheel.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD THESE "Tillamook County Jail," "The Ballad of the Kingsmen," "Sunshine"

REGINA SPEKTOR

SOVIET KITSCH ★★★★★

SHOPLIFTER

Exhilarating leftfield record from Moscow-bred Strokes pet

At last, the answer: This is what happens when a classically trained Russian pianist immigrates to New York City at age 9 and becomes deeply (but not fatally) infected with the virus called

ALI G:

So when you arrived on the moon, was the people who lived there friendly or was they scared of you?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

There was absolutely no thought of encountering any living being whatsoever.

ALI G:

Do you think man will ever walk on the sun?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

No. The sun is too hot. It is not a good place to go to.

ALI G:

What happens if they went in winter, when the sun is cold?

BUZZ ALDRIN:

The sun is not cold in the winter.

Ali G meets Buzz Aldrin.

Episode 4.

Da Ali G Show

I LOVE THIS CD!



LINDSAY LOHAN
ACTRESS IN
MEAN GIRLS



ROONEY ROONEY
GEPHEN

"Robert Carmine, their singer, is amazing, and the band has such a cool sound. I'm really into that retro-rock thing."



Pitbull: "Whaddya mean I'll never play the piano again?"



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pop. She gets discovered by Julian Casablancas and taken on tour to open for his famous rock band. Then she releases a CD of her alternately ravishing, kooky and macabre anti-folk songs. Some are rockers with a full backing band. Others are just her voice and her piano. One seems to be a breakup song, but more bewildered than depressed ("Ode to Divorce"). Another ("Chemo Limo") tells the story of a \$100 bill that baby-sits children. Traces of Joni Mitchell, PJ Harvey, Björk and Cat Power are all proudly on display in the unpredictable arrangements and off-kilter emotions. "And it's contagious!" Spektr belts and repeats at the end of "Us." Yep.

STEVE BODOW

DOWNLOAD THESE "Us," "Your Honor"

PETER STAMPFEL & THE BOTTLECAPS

THE JIG IS UP ★★★★★

BLUE NAVIGATOR

Folkie musicologist releases umpteenth great album in his 40-plus-year career

Peter Stampfel, the 66-year-old eccentric who cofounded cult collective the Holy Modal Rounders, is the Willy Wonka of music archivists. His covers of early, obscure folk and bluegrass classics — sung in an inimitable, sometimes comic warble — are jubilant and haunting, irreverent but deeply loving. This disc, recorded sporadically in the early '90s with five longtime collaborators, is evenly split between gems (often with altered melodies or lyrics) such as Stephen Foster's "Old Dog Tray" and offbeat acoustic ditties written by Stampfel or contemporaries like Michael Hurley. Stampfel's songs, such as the darkly funny hum-alongs "Busted" and "Stupid Jerk," zip by delightfully, and the twangy, doctored "New Riley the Furniture Man," a traditional campfire jig about the repo man, is a typically unsentimental sampling of Americana. Though it still might bring a lump to your throat.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THESE "New Riley the Furniture Man," "Busted," "Song of Man"

MAVIS STAPLES

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH ★★★★★

ALLIGATOR

Soul matriarch sounds like a funky grandma on this crackling inspirational set

Aretha Franklin is still the Queen of Soul, but her voice rarely sounds majestic these days. Mavis Staples,

who anchored the gospel-soul family group the Staple Singers ("Respect Yourself") and who at 64 still has the throaty rasp and sexy moans of her youth, was a contemporary of Franklin's, and she's made the kind of committed, heartfelt record we haven't heard from Aretha in decades.

Staples has always been comfortable with dark, funky grooves ("I Wanna Thank You") and cautionary tales flavored with blues ("There's a Devil on the Loose"). Yet the

most affecting tracks have a country-folk feel: On "Step Into the Light," the richness of her lower tones is balanced by the brightness of acoustic guitar. A few songs strive so hard to be "positive" that they go a little mushy at the core, but Staples's royal cadences, which emphasize the space between the words as much as they do the words themselves, are still quite singular.

NELSON GEORGE

DOWNLOAD THESE "Step Into the Light," "Ain't No Better Than You"

TOMMY STINSON

VILLAGE GORILLA HEAD

★★★★

SANCTUARY

Onetime member of '80s indie icons the Replacements goes solo

What's smaller and smarter than a Velvet Revolver? A Velvet Squirrel Gun? Current Guns N' Roses bassist (and onetime preteen bassist for Minneapolis punk-rock greats the Replacements) Tommy Stinson gets a lot of time off as Axl Rose polishes his *Chinese Democracy*. On his vacation, Stinson has made a record that manages to sound fully engaged and optimistic even while it's sad all over the place. *Village Gorilla Head* is full of loud and introspective pop shaped into bittersweet songs that evoke Big Star and Cheap Trick. His GN'R mates Dizzy Reed (keyboards) and Richard Fortus (guitar) drop by to help on some tracks, but Stinson plays much of this moody music himself. At the end, he tenderly croons over and →

I LOVE THIS CD!



JAMES MARSDEN
ACTOR IN
THE NOTEBOOK

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT
WANT ONE
DREAMWORKS

"This is an album that I listen to a lot. One of the things I like most about it: his almost-operatic arrangements."

Ashlee Simpson:
Better than Jessica
with big words,
worse with socks



THE DARK ONE

Jessica's little sister dodges the ditz gene and gets tuff

ASHLEE SIMPSON AUTOBIOGRAPHY ★★★

GEFFEN

ON HER WEEKLY MTV reality show, Ashlee Simpson is easy to like and hard to care about. She's a well-adjusted, well-behaved 19-year-old, which is good news for her parents but makes for seriously low-impact TV. Despite producers' best efforts to milk some tension out of her everyday foibles (locking her keys in her car, learning to use a mop, breaking up with a boy), they come up empty. Watching her older sister, Jessica, on *Newlyweds*, we enjoy seeing a charmed life upended by big words and *Chicken of the Sea*. With Ashlee, a can of tuna's just a can of tuna.

But where Jessica is an addictive TV star who makes impossibly bland music, Ashlee's a great drama queen in the studio. There isn't a song on her debut that doesn't paint in huge strokes. Befitting an MTV debutante, choruses soar (the lead single, "Pieces of Me"), ballads surge ("Shadow," her trying-to-live-up-to-Jessica lament) and multi-tracked guitars are perfectly tuned to Top 40 radio.

It's her vocals, though, that make you think she may have been adopted: They're refreshingly unfluffed, with a ragged tomboy

edge that's consistently affecting. She's got Gwen's ability to lace lil'-girl pouts with tuff-girl edge, Britney's way of sexing up lines by curling her lip and — her secret weapon — a raw, Courtney-indebted scream that she whips out only when she's *really* exasperated.

On "Pieces of Me," she says she used to be sad but now she's, y'know, happy — think Avril on Paxil. You'd never see the monkey wrench called "La La" coming: "I like it better when it hurts," she pants, fantasizing about rough sex in no uncertain terms. Beneath the hormonal rush lies a plea to be tossed around and dominated: In the context of Ashlee's redheaded-stepchild insecurities, this masochism hints at darker depths.

Later, she proves she can dish it out, too, packing "Love Me for Me" with so many coy mood swings and head games it could vaporize an emo boy on contact. At album's start, Ashlee calls herself a "simple girl." Knotted moments like these help prove her intriguingly wrong.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Pieces of Me," "Shadow"

LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE!

AVRIL LAVIGNE
LET GO ARISTA

KATY ROSE
BECAUSE I CAN V2

Lit



"..F***ing Brilliant!!!!!"

— *Some English Dude*

"...these guys should change their name to UPS, because on their new record, Lit really delivers!"

— *T-Bone / Lit's Friend & Tour Manager*

"...If Elvis Costello, STP, Cheap Trick and Foo Fighters got together and made a record.....that would be rad."

— *We forget who said it, but you should buy Lit anyway.*



The New Self-Titled Album
Featuring "Looks Like They Were Right"
& "Times Like This"

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NIRUS

Dusty Martini

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© 2004 Until There's A Cure Foundation Photo: Howard Joe

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THE GUIDE NEW RELEASES

over, "Something of use will come". Whether Stinson is talking about his life or about *Chinese Democracy*, either way he's convincingly optimistic.

RJ SMITH

DOWNLOAD THESE "Without a View," "Something's Wrong," "Couldn't Wait"

MARTINA TOPLEY-BIRD

ANYTHING ★★★★★

PALM

Formerly caged, trip-hop's rarest Bird goes solo



Trip-hop icon Tricky, baby-father to Martina Topley-Bird, has a talent for making other people's work seem like his own. Topley-Bird graced his three best records (including 1995's luscious *Maxinquaye*) with her jazzy heroin-chic vocals, and he suffered a slump when she left. But she was still considered his support staff. On her debut, *Anything* (a reordered and reedited version of last year's U.K. release *Quixotic*), she bum-rushes the master's dub-rock territory, flipping dancehall beats, electro blues and even guitar anthems. Her effortless cool has gained range: She coos co-dependently on the first track — "I don't need anything but you" — but by the eighth song she's screaming, "I am too tough to die!" Somehow, amid the musical and emotional surprises, she makes both sentiments ring true.

JAMES HANNAHAM

DOWNLOAD THESE "Anything," "Soul Food," "I Still Feel"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

KOMPAKT 100 ★★★★★

KOMPAKT

German techno wonks in mass remixing shocker!

The Köln, Germany, label Kompakt specializes in smooth, boppy electronic music that's recognizably connected to pop, if not exactly song-based. For their hundredth release, they've had 21 artists remix their favorite Kompakts. The label's most brilliant piece of hype has been *schaffel*, a techno version of the '70s glam-rock shuffle beat, and the highlight of this set is Justus Köhncke's reworking of a Freiland track into a mutated cover of T. Rex's "Hot Love." A few of the tracks here still seem like little more than a loping beat and a few synth-preset chords, but there's an intriguing variety of approaches to headphone/laptop electronica found on *Kompakt 100*, notably SCS1 9's glitch-sparkled digital dub and Joachim Spieth's foreboding recontextualization of synth-pop sounds.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE Justus Köhncke feat. Meloboy, "Freiland/Frei/Hot Love," Reinhard Voigt, "Closer Musik/Megamix"



Martina Topley-Bird: Sponsored by Clorox

VARIOUS ARTISTS

POR VIDA: A TRIBUTE TO THE SONGS OF ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO ★★★★★

OR

Eclectic array of performers gives Texas songwriter the legend treatment

Alejandro Escovedo's seven acclaimed solo albums have earned him a few pennies to rattle inside a can, but his true measure may be the love he inspires among fellow musicians. This tribute, a benefit to help Escovedo defray medical costs from hepatitis C, is the kind of outpouring usually reserved for heavy hitters like Bob Dylan: 30-plus performers giving vibrant life to Escovedo's difficult, often dirge-like chronicles of marital discord and personal dissolution. Alt-country regulars Lucinda Williams, the Jayhawks and Son Volt dish out heartache, but the most interesting tracks come from less-expected quarters. Former Mott the Hoople frontman Ian Hunter plays "One More Time" as a Stonies ravage; the Nicholas Tremulis Orchestra miraculously combines calypso and Tex-Mex on "Velvet Guitar." Even if *Por Vida* didn't make a dime for the needy musician, Escovedo would still be richer for it.

KAREN SCHOEMER

DOWNLOAD THESE Jon Langford and Sally Timms, "Broken Bottle"; Jennifer Warnes, "Pissed Off 2 A.M."; Howe Gelb, "She Towers Above"

I LOVE THIS CD!



TOM KENNY
THE VOICE OF SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS



NRBQ DUMMY
EDISUN

"It's inspiring to me that they've been around for 35 years and they're still making great music!"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE UNBROKEN CIRCLE: THE MUSICAL HERITAGE OF THE CARTER FAMILY ★★★★★

DUALTONE

Tribute to the Depression-era Virginia clan, country's first famous group

The Carter Family practically invented country music in the 1920s, and their influence has endured: They gave the No Depression movement a name (after their song of the same title) and Gillian Welch her fashion sense. But it's not easy to assemble a tribute album to a group whose songs are as common in country as drinking problems, and this one keeps to the safe side. George Jones brings a lifetime of woe to "Worried Man Blues" and Emmylou Harris and the Peasall Sisters harmonize beautifully for "On the Sea of Galilee," but most of the performers on this album are too respectful to add anything in the way of a modern perspective. The Carters, who were never photographed in anything but black and white, would be disappointed to hear these singers add so little color.

ROBERT LEVINE

DOWNLOAD THIS Johnny Cash, "Engine One-Forty-Three"

WALKING CONCERT

RUN TO BE BORN ★★★★★

SOME

Alt godfather's new band trades anguish for pancakes

After formulating influential, idiosyncratic punk-metal for 15 years without escaping New York's underground, Walking Concert frontman Walter Schreifels (formerly of proto-emo greats Quicksand) wants to prove his pop chops. Fans will recognize his quavery voice and breakneck ardor — most of the tracks are well under three minutes — but wonder what happened to his inky swirls of guitar and the angst they articulated. Occasionally Schreifels aims too squarely at classic radio precedents; the tacked-on *woo-hoo-ohs* closing "Mustang Ford" artlessly honor the Beach Boys. But on "What's Your New Thing?" and "Audrey" (in which he promises a lover they'll "work it out over pancakes"), his infectious, jangly alt-optimism is tempered with strains of melancholy. Popping above ground, he still sees his shadow.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THIS "What's Your New Thing?"

WEST INDIAN GIRL

WEST INDIAN GIRL ★★★★★

ASTRALWERKS

Psychedelic rockers' drugged-out debut makes for one lame trip

Los Angeles's West Indian Girl are named for a variety of LSD, but their

debut album is a more powerful argument against drug use than anything the government could come up with. If Robert James and Francis Ten are anything to go by, too many altered states can lead to dippy, nonsensical lyrics and the kind of ersatz psychedelia that composers on *The Simpsons* cook up when Homer's hallucinating. Inspired by Syd Barrett, My Bloody Valentine, Underworld and, y'know, sunshine and stuff, James and Ten are well-intentioned but woolly, and their acid-dipped candyfloss makes the Polyphonic Spree's blissed-out pop sound like Dick Cheney. Sounds like they left the doors of perception open a mite too long.

DORIAN LYNKEY

DOWNLOAD THIS "Trip"

WILEY

TREDDIN' ON THIN ICE

★★★

XL

Dizzee Rascal's former mentor makes the best British hip-hop song ever (about stuffing your face with pies)

Of all the genres Brits have tried to break stateside, "grime" seems the most alien: Imagine hyperactive dancehall-influenced MCs squawking double-time rhymes over a din of ring tones and car



Guest in which pocket Wiley keeps his change.

alarms. Following his former protégé Dizzee Rascal, Wiley's charged debut is full of ghetto desperation ("Treddin' on Thin Ice"), thumping braggadocio (the bleating "Pies," which turns a soccer chant into a great hook about overeating), gun-slinging and plenty more you don't usually associate with swinging London. Though his production is glossier and pop-friendlier than other grime acts — Wiley's rawest beats are relegated to brief interludes here — standouts like "Wot Do U Call It?" and

"Goin' Mad" are perfect marriages of high-energy beats and Cockney swagger. Meanwhile, the sparse, end-of-his-wits closer, "I Was Lost," suggests the Neptunes jamming in an igloo — and proves he's got something else you don't see coming at first: range.

HUA HSU

DOWNLOAD THESE "I Was Lost," "Wot Do U Call It?," "Pies"

KELLER WILLIAMS

STAGE ★

SCI FIDELITY

One-man jam band, familiar to DMB fans, delivers two live discs of novelties

It doesn't need any help, but Keller Williams, who tours with noodlers like Dave Matthews Band, gives jamming a bad name. His jokey originals and irreverent covers — crafted from acoustic guitar, bass and drum machine, which he samples and loops on the spot — aren't gracefully improvised, nor are they funny enough to be comedy. On these two sets, played separately before seated and dancing audiences, Williams throws together a twitchy, 10-minute version of Van Morrison's "Moondance" in which he hums the horn figures and randomly moans; touts karma and dodging "things that can complicate" in the elaborately strummed "Keep It Simple"; and finally admits to not giving "a shit" on "Novelty Song," a winking display of bass virtuosity. At least there's only one of him.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THESE None

YOUNG ROME

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ★★★

TUG/UNIVERSAL

Former Immature kiddie crooner makes the leap into sex-educated party jams

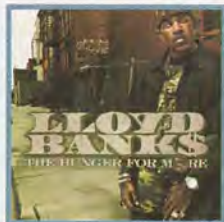
When you're a pop star by age 11, life must seem pretty damn easy. Young Rome — a 22-year-old Los Angeles native whose syrupy, lackadaisical raps recall another '90s phenomenon, Ma\$e — exudes sanguine confidence and adolescent charm. The former member of R&B novelties Immature fluently fills bubbly dance-floor anthems with such brazen double entendres as "Chicks get wet when I spit/Go crazy when they see my whip" (the booming Neptunes homage "Freaky"), while proving his verbal agility by playfully adopting out-of-character voices. On "I Don't Care," a dark-crunk drinking song featuring Dirty South duo Youngbloodz, he suddenly turns ominous; later, actually playing drunk, Rome hilariously slurs his way through the sloppy late-night come-on "Sexapade." He sounds like the kind of guy whose glass is always half-full.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THESE "After Party," "I Don't Care," "Sexapade"

BLENDER APPROVED

The best NEW RELEASES of the last three months

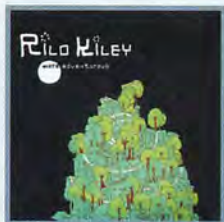


LLOYD BANKS

THE HUNGER FOR MORE

G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE

50 Cent's gruff homey nearly makes his boss look like a Care Bear — his solo debut is an unflagging superthug routine, strictly for the roughnecks.



RILO KILEY

MORE ADVENTUROUS

BRUTE/BEAUTE

These L.A. indie-rockers make smart music for lovelorn loners on their third album. Sweet-voiced Jenny Lewis is wry and regretful at once.



THE HIVES

TYRANNOSAURUS HIVES

EPIC

On their latest, the Swedish garage-punk heroes make a racket like Devo whipping the Sex Pistols — plus, they dress like mod Colonel Sanders!



GRETCHEN WILSON

HERE FOR THE PARTY

INTERSCOPE

On the year's best country album, Wilson touts Skynyrd, tight jeans, Jack Daniel's. She adds, "You might think I'm trashy." The thought had occurred.



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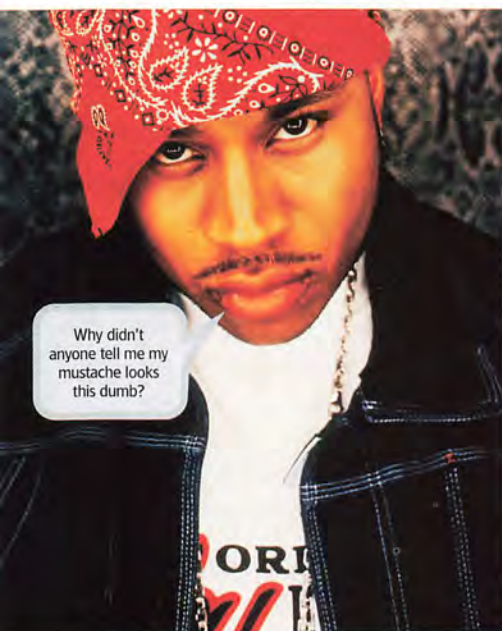


THE

40

MOST POPULAR SONGS IN AMERICA

G-Unit toughs and ex-Creed rockers can't trump Usher's baby-mama drama!



Why didn't anyone tell me my mustache looks this dumb?

6

LL COOL J
"HEADSPRUNG"
DEFINITION

Hip-hop's most famous biceps return for album number 11. In a career full of music to bed honeys by, this single is strictly for the ruffnecks: Over a rocking Timbaland beat, a toughened LL throws his 'bows and gets crunk. Later this month, he kicks off a national tour in Syracuse, New York. Next month, E! airs a one-hour special on him.

HOW WE DID IT



The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay and album sales. Provided by HITSDailyDouble.com: "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a Web site."

POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"CONFESSIONS PT. II"	USHER	CONFESSIONS LAFACE/ARISTA
2	"LET ME IN"	YOUNG BUCK FEAT. 50 CENT	STRAIGHT OUTTA CASHVILLE G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE
3	"OPEN YOUR EYES"	ALTER BRIDGE	ONE DAY REMAINS WIND-UP
4	"HEAVEN"	LOS LONELY BOYS	LOS LONELY BOYS ORFIC
5	"SLOW MOTION"	JUVENILE	JUVE THE GREAT CASH MONEY/UNIVERSAL
6	"HEADSPRUNG"	LL COOL J	DEFINITION DEF JAM
7	"THROW YA HANDS"	MOBB DEEP	AMERIKAZ NIGHTMARE JIVE
8	"PIECES OF ME"	ASHLEE SIMPSON	AUTOBIOGRAPHY GEFFEN
9	"I LIKE THAT"	HOUSTON FEAT. CHINGY/NATE DOGG	IT'S ALREADY WRITTEN CAPITOL
10	"HOW COME"	D12	D12 WORLD SHADY/INTERSCOPE
11	"ON FIRE"	LLOYD BANKS	HUNGER FOR MORE G-UNIT/INTERSCOPE
12	"U SAVED ME"	R. KELLY	HAPPY PEOPLE/U SAVED ME JIVE
13	"OCEAN AVENUE"	YELLOWCARD	OCEAN AVENUE CAPITOL
14	"FLOAT ON"	MODEST MOUSE	GOOD NEWS FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE BAD NEWS EPIC
15	"TAKE ME OUT"	FRANZ FERDINAND	FRANZ FERDINAND EPIC
16	"THE REASON"	HOOBASTANK	THE REASON ISLAND
17	"VINDICATED"	DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL	SPIDER-MAN 2 SOUNDTRACK COLUMBIA/SONY MUSIC SOUNDTRAX
18	"LET'S GET IT STARTED"	THE BLACK EYED PEAS	ELEPHUNK A&M
19	"SO SEXY"	TWISTA FEAT. R. KELLY	KAMIKAZE ATLANTIC
20	"SHE WILL BE LOVED"	MAROON 5	SONGS ABOUT JANE DCTONE/J RECORDS
21	"LEAVE (GET OUT)"	JOJO	JOJO UNIVERSAL
22	"MY HAPPY ENDING"	AVRIL LAVIGNE	UNDER MY SKIN ARISTA
23	"OUR LIPS ARE SEALED"	HILARY & HAYLIE DUFF	A CINDERELLA STORY OST BUENA VISTA/HOLLYWOOD
24	"MEANT TO LIVE"	SWITCHFOOT	THE BEAUTIFUL LETDOWN RED INC./COLUMBIA
25	"OUTRAGEOUS"	BRITNEY SPEARS	IN THE ZONE JIVE
26	"LEAN BACK"	TERROR SQUAD	TRUE STORY STREET RECORDS CORP./UNIVERSAL
27	"IF I AIN'T GOT YOU"	ALICIA KEYS	THE DIARY OF ALICIA KEYS J RECORDS
28	"SAME DIRECTION"	HOOBASTANK	THE REASON ISLAND
29	"JESUS WALKS"	KANYE WEST	THE COLLEGE DROPOUT ROC-A-FELLA
30	"SOMEBODY TOLD ME"	THE KILLERS	HOT FUSS ISLAND
31	"FREEK-A-LEEK"	PETEY PABLO	STILL WRITING IN MY DIARY: 2ND ENTRY JIVE
32	"A FAVOR HOUSE ATLANTIC"	COHEED AND CAMBRIA	IN KEEPING SECRETS ... EQUAL VISION/COLUMBIA
33	"CH-CHECK IT OUT"	BEASTIE BOYS	TO THE 5 BOROUGHES CAPITOL
34	"SO COLD"	BREAKING BENJAMIN	WE ARE NOT ALONE HOLLYWOOD
35	"SLITHER"	VELVET REVOLVER	CONTRABAND RCA
36	"GOODIES"	CIARA FEAT. PETEY PABLO	GOODIES LAFACE/COLUMBIA
37	"ROLLOVER D.J."	JET	GET BORN ELEKTRA
38	"STORM"	LENNY KRAVITZ FEAT. JAY-Z	BAPTISM VIRGIN
39	"TIME'S UP"	JADAKISS FEAT. NATE DOGG	KISS OF DEATH RUFF RYDERS/INTERSCOPE
40	"SOME KIND OF MONSTER"	METALLICA	SOME KIND OF MONSTER EP ELEKTRA

8

ASHLEE SIMPSON
"PIECES OF ME"
AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Who says blondes have more sales? This soaring single from Jessica's tomboyish little sis broke big on Top 40 radio. An MTV reality show documenting her every move, plus performances last month on *David Letterman* and *Ryan Seacrest*, haven't hurt, either. This fall, she launches her first tour.

9

HOUSTON
"I LIKE THAT"
IT'S ALREADY WRITTEN



With Chingy and Nate Dogg lending assists, this 19-year-old L.A. R&B horn-dog has scored a hit straight out of the box. Earlier this summer, he was featured on the WB's *Pepsi Smash*. He's currently sharing a bill with Fefe Dobson and hip-hoppers Young Gunz on the Just Play Games tour.

32

COHEED AND CAMBRIA
"A FAVOR HOUSE ATLANTIC"
IN KEEPING SECRETS ...



Emo and prog canoodle on this Kingston, New York, foursome's breakout hit: 'Fro-sporting Claudio Sanchez sings about fantasy worlds and girl trouble. Catch this song's video clip on MTV and MTV2 — and catch the band live in their Warped Tour slot, which ends later this month in Massachusetts.

THE 10 MOST POPULAR RING TONES IN AMERICA

Hey, pick up the phone — Usher, Outkast and a lovable cartoon pooch are calling this month!

1. "MY BAND"	D12
2. "ROSES"	OUTKAST
3. "BURN"	USHER
4. "CONFESSIONS PT. II"	USHER
5. "IRON MAN"	BLACK SABBATH
6. "TIPSY" (INSTRUMENTAL)	J-KWON
7. "SCOOBY DOO"	THEME
8. "LET'S GET AWAY"	T.I.
9. "ALL FALLS DOWN"	KANYE WEST
10. "HOTEL"	CASSIDY

SOURCE: VIRGIN MOBILE

***"Should someone
be forced to
pay for minutes
they don't use?"***

Not in my America."

Pay As You Go by  ***Live without a plan.***



She's come a long way since her wild days of sneaking into gay nightclubs and dating Marilyn Manson. But 28-year-old *Charmed* star **Rose McGowan** still thinks a good night out calls for some AC/DC

BY ADAM HIGGINBOTHAM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

"You Must Headbang!"

DRESS BY HAYLEY STARR;
SHOES BY MARC JACOBS;
JEWELRY BY KAVIER AND KIND

PHOTOGRAPHED AT GOOD LUCK
BAR, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA,
MARCH 23, 2004

THE CD THAT REMINDS ME OF BEING A NERD



PULP
THIS IS HARDCORE
ISLAND, 1998

"If you've ever felt like a complete nerd, there's something eminently believable about Jarvis Cocker, with his big, thick glasses and sickly pallor. Growing up, I went to nine schools in 11 years. Before that I was in Italy, living in a commune with a bunch of freaky hippies. I bounced between places a lot: marriage-divorce, marriage-divorce, marriage-divorce. In some towns, I'd be the hot, popular thing, and then in the next I'd be a total freak."

THE CD I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IN FIFTH GRADE



PRINCE AND THE NEW POWER GENERATION
PURPLE RAIN
WARNER BROS., 1984

"I came from Italy when I was 9. I hadn't been doing a lot of pop-music listening there, just classical. Why? I don't know. Why did we have to read the Bible every day? I don't know. So *Purple Rain* was the fifth grade. I didn't really understand what 'Darling Nikki' meant, but my brother and I would listen to it and snicker together. I knew there was something bad, but I wasn't sure what it was. I've figured it out since then."

THE CD THAT HELPED ME SLEEP AT NIGHT



PATSY CLINE
THE PATSY CLINE STORY
MCA, 1963

"When I was 11 or 12, I wandered into a movie theater in Eugene, Oregon, and it had *Sweet Dreams* playing. I walked in thinking it was going to be some teen movie — but it was Patsy and her life story. I promptly went out and bought a tape, and I used to listen to it so much that all the print wore off both sides. I was obsessed. I could go to sleep only with that playing at night — until I was 19."

THE CD MY SISTERS MADE ME FEEL CREEPY ABOUT



ROD STEWART
GREATEST HITS
WARNER BROS., 1979

"I love me some Rod Stewart, mm-hmm. 'Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?' is my favorite. When we lived in Colorado, my little sisters used to put on performances of it. There was a big fireplace, and it had a ledge like a miniature stage coming out of it, and they would do their dances to 'Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?' in their pajamas and slippers. Even when I was 11, looking at them being 7 and 8, I thought there was something disturbing about the situation."

THE CD THAT MAKES ME FEEL LONELY



FRANK SINATRA
WHERE ARE YOU?
CAPITOL, 1957

"I started listening to Frank when I was 14. I had a horrible crush on him. Before he had to start wearing a toupee, he was dead-on, wildly handsome. This is his great heartbreak period. If one is in that mood — and I've had so many of those periods — you can definitely go there with him. I have the ability to feel intense loneliness when I'm among 500 people or all by myself. I think I'm just born that way: the melancholy Irish."

AND MORE...

AEROSMITH GREATEST HITS
CHRISTINA AGUILERA STRIPPED
JOSEPHINE BAKER THE FABULOUS
JOSEPHINE BAKER MANDY
BARNETT I'VE GOT A RIGHT TO CRY
SHIRLEY BASSEY THE BEST OF PAT BENATAR
BEST SHOTS BLUR THE BEST OF BT
EMOTIONAL TECHNOLOGY MARIA CALLAS LA DIVINA
VIC CHESNUTT ABOUT TO CHOKO
COCTEAU TWINS HEAVEN OR LAS VEGAS
CONCRETE BLONDE BLOODLETTER SHERYL CROW THE GLOBE
SESSIONS THE CULT LOVE THE DARKNESS
PERMISSION TO LAND EMINEM THE EMINEM SHOW
CONNIE FRANCIS THE VERY BEST OF JUDY GARLAND
THE WOOD GHOST BLAZER ACT RIGHT GOD LIVES UNDERWATER
EMPTY GUNS N' ROSES APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION
GUNS N' ROSES GN'R LIES GERI HALLIWELL
SCHIZOPHONIC PJ HARVEY IS THIS DESIRE? PJ HARVEY TO BRING YOU MY LOVE
HEATMISER MIC CITY SONS BILLY IDOL REBEL
YELL IGGY & THE STODGES
RAW POWER ETTA JAMES THE ESSENTIALS THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN HONEY'S DEAD
JET GET BORN KELIS TASTY CYNDI LAUPER
SHE'S SO UNUSUAL PEGGY LEE THE EARLY YEARS
PEGGY LEE THE MARVELOUS MISS LEE JULIE LONDON
THE VERY BEST OF LORETTA LYNN ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS
SHELBY LYNE I AM SHELBY LYNE LYNRYD SKYNYRD ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS
MADONNA AMERICAN LIFE MADONNA I'M BREATHELESS
MADONNA MUSIC MEMPHIS MINNIE HOT STUFF
GEORGE MICHAEL LISTEN WITHOUT PREJUDICE, VOL. 1
KYLIE MINOGUE BODY LANGUAGE KYLIE MINOGUE FEVER MOBY PLAY MONSTER MAGNET DOPES TO INFINITY
MORCHEEBA WHO CAN YOU TRUST? NIGHT RANGER ROCK IN JAPAN
NIRVANA BLEACH NIRVANA NEVER-MIND NO DOUBT ROCK STEADY OASIS (WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING GLORY? OUTKAST
SPEAKER-BXXX/7 THE LOVE BELOW PINK FLOYD A COLLECTION OF GREAT DANCE SONGS PORTISHEAD DUMMY ELVIS PRESLEY THE SUN SESSIONS
PULP DIFFERENT CLASS QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE SONGS FOR THE DEAF RADIOHEAD
XID A OTIS REDDING LOVE SONGS THE RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS THE BEST OF MARTY ROBBINS
ALL-TIME GREATEST HITS THE ROLLING STONES LET IT BLEED
NINA SIMONE MY BABY JUST CARES FOR ME
FRANK SINATRA PORTRAIT OF SINATRA
FRANK SINATRA SINATRA'S SWINGIN' SESSION THE SISTERS OF MERCY FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS
ELLIOTT SMITH FIGURE 8
BRITNEY SPEARS IN THE ZONE DUSTY SPRINGFIELD THE VERY BEST OF BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
GREATEST HITS SHIRLEY TEMPLE AMERICA'S SWEETHEART JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE JUSTIFIED TLC FAN MAIL
VARIOUS ARTISTS NATURAL BORN KILLERS ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK
VARIOUS ARTISTS BOOGIE NIGHTS ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK THE VERVE A STORM IN HEAVEN
VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS DINAH WASHINGTON THE ESSENTIALS "WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC POLKA PARTY! DWIGHT YOAKAM THIS TIME

THE CD FOR OBLIGATORY HEADBANGING



AC/DC
BACK IN BLACK
EPIC, 1980

"I had to have heard this when I was 14 — if I was in a town with a lot of hicks, they would always be blasting it out of their Corvettes. It's my favorite record to rock out to: You can drink too much and be somewhere they play something off *Back in Black*, and you must headbang. I've got long hair; you can do some mean head-spinning. Then the next day you feel like you've been in a car crash."

THE CD THAT REMINDS ME OF GOING TO GAY NIGHTCLUBS



SINEAD O'CONNOR
THE LION AND THE COBRA
CHRYSALIS, 1987

"Here we go with the melancholy again. I bought *The Lion and the Cobra* in Seattle when I was 12. I hadn't heard it — I just liked her face on the poster. It reminds me of sneaking into gay nightclubs in Seattle, staying up until 7 in the morning, sleeping in parks — I had told my father I was staying the night at a girlfriend's house. I was doing a lot of strange, strange things. But I got being crazy out of my system very early."

THE CD FOR SCRUBBING THE FLOOR



VARIOUS ARTISTS
L.A. CONFIDENTIAL SOUNDTRACK
RESTLESS, 1997

"The movie was great. God, Russell Crowe was hot. . . . But I digress. It was really the songs. 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive' and Kay Starr singing 'Wheel of Fortune' can't be beat. I love that period, the '40s and early '50s — my mom always listened to that kind of music, so I grew up with it. I was listening to this yesterday, very loud, because I was outside on my hands and knees, scrubbing algae off my tile."

THE CD THAT MAKES ME GLAD I DON'T WORRY ABOUT MY MAN



DOLLY PARTON
JOLENE
RCA, 1974

"So much country music is about keeping your man or their man done them wrong. I listen to it with slight terror of what could have been if my life had taken a different path — and you're the kind of woman who's living for a man, and your life is predicated on whether he's coming home or running around with somebody else. I grew up with people around me who had that attitude toward men — but I don't think it will happen to me."

THE CD FOR ACTING OUT MY MURDER FANTASIES



NICK CAVE
MURDER BALLADS
MUTE/REPRISE, 1996

"The murder ballads are all stories. Maybe it's the acting thing, but in 'Where the Wild Roses Grow,' with Kylie Minogue, I imagine myself as that character, having my head beaten in with a stone. I don't really care for the ones where it's loud and raucous yelling and the men are getting killed. I don't really relate. I prefer the songs where women are getting killed."

→ Rose McGowan currently stars in the WB's *Charmed*.



Party Till You Drop

How did America's greatest hard-rock band turn into bores?

VAN HALEN THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

WARNER BROS.

EDDIE VAN HALEN, a girl recently told *Blender*, keeps his hip in a freezer, wrapped in ice. She had held it while visiting the guitarist after his hip-replacement surgery. Eddie's hip, she said, was inert, outdated and very, very cold. It's a great metaphor for the superior Los Angeles hard-rock band Eddie named after himself.

At a time when their hometown had nothing but punk bands, Van Halen

announced themselves in 1978 with "Eruption," 102 seconds of controlled freak-out. It was a new kind of guitar, sinuous and lyrical, distorted in a manner that suggested windows shivering in their frames, a rush of overblown riffing and whammy-bar whoops, down-stroke flurries and lightning hammer-on lines, all bass and chilly treble. It was ridiculous, it was the most influential guitar solo since Jimi Hendrix played "The Star-Spangled Banner" at Woodstock and it inspired a generation of what 50 Cent might call guitar wankstas playing increasingly fast.

On album and at early shows,

"Eruption" segued into a cover of "You Really Got Me," an overdriven version of the Kinks' raver that represented Van Halen's other influence: the intelligence and simplicity of the British Invasion bands, which in turn were influenced by music-hall traditions as well as Chuck Berry. But on *The Best of Both Worlds*, Van Halen's second attempt at a greatest-hits package, "Eruption" leads instead into a charmless pud-pounder, "It's About Time" — one of three consecutive unmemorable new songs from the reunited band — and the disconnect may be violent enough to propel your hand toward the eject button



Van Halen, from left: Michael Anthony, David Lee Roth, Alex Van Halen, Eddie Van Halen



With Sammy Hagar: Warning! Not all prison-shower experiences are as fun as this.

barely two or three seconds into the song.

The two worlds of the collection's title are the opposite phases of VH's career: the David Lee Roth Era, through 1985, and the Sammy Hagar Era, which started the next year, after Roth left for a solo career he's still hoping will pan out. (There was a third era featuring Gary Cherone of Extreme, but the less said of it, the better.)

The mocking tone of Roth's voice and the hammy irony of his lyrics owed more to vaudevillians like Louis Prima than they did to any metal precedent. Roth was simultaneously a hard-rock singer and a hipster winking at the idea of being a

hard-rock singer. He reveled in the benefits and glories of being a long-haired, Spandexed rock god and also understood that heavy-metal singers are one tube of lipstick removed from circus clowns.

Hagar was a journeyman howler who took his job too seriously. Both guys sang almost exclusively about sex, but where Roth was a rascal, complicated and

**ROTH WAS A RASCAL;
HAGAR WAS A PIG.**

compassionate, Hagar was just a pig incapable of subtlety or charm: His best song, "Finish What Ya Started," with great hesitant picking from Eddie, is about an uncompleted blow job.

Under Hagar, VH lost speed and wit (unless you're among the dozen or so people who think "only time will tell if we stand the test of time" is a good lyric), and as Eddie replaced guitar with synthesizers, they turned into a progged-up version of Journey, damp and ballady. The "Van Hagar" albums may have as many fans as the early, funny ones, but they are assuredly different fans. And unfortunately, this compilation essentially alternates tracks from the two singers, instead of arranging them coherently or chronologically.

Van Halen fans often debate a chicken-and-egg question: Did Hagar cause VH to suck, or was he a symptom of the suckage? Even those who prefer Roth's sly Dean Martin-goes-to-Pasadena High approach might think this two-CD set's back-and-forth exonerates Hagar. "Jump," the biggest hit of the Roth era (it hit number 1 in 1984), marked the beginning of VH's synth fixation. After that, Eddie occasionally mixed tough riffs with keyboards, notably on "Why Can't This Be Love." But most of their Hagar songs were built around glossy studiocraft instead of sheer malevolent glee.

A compilation of hits from the Roth years would be something close to a public service. As nicely remastered as it is, *The Best of Both Worlds* is unlistenable without easy access to the skip-track button on your Discman. JONATHAN GOLD

DOWNLOAD THESE "Dance the Night Away," "Hot for Teacher," "Jump"

311

GREATEST HITS '93-'03 ★★

VOLCANO/ZOMBA

Pothead-friendly rap-rockers compile highlights of their underrated career

As rap-rock's resident hippies, 311 proved that not every fan of that derided genre wanted to break stuff. Even their heaviest riffs — like the ear-splitting chunks of guitar in their biggest hit, 1996's "Down" — are balanced by the Omaha-born, L.A.-residing five-

some's spry, hip-hop inflected rhythms and Nick Hexum's wispy melodies. (Rapper SA Martinez just adds texture.) And for every headbanger, there's an effervescent reggae hybrid. "Do You Right," an early ode to beach life, swings hard with a sprinting tempo, seamlessly incorporating fuzzed-out guitar, honeyed harmonizing and a frenetic ska break. Meanwhile, the dubby new single "First Straw," an unprecedented attempt at balladry, suffers from a loose, draggy groove. Maybe they shouldn't bother trying to break new ground, either.

NICK CATUCCI

DOWNLOAD THIS "Do You Right"

JEFF BUCKLEY

GRACE: LEGACY EDITION

★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Late balladeer's angsty-choirboy blues still smolders, though rarities add little tinder to the fire

Since this foxy 30-year-old guitarist-troubadour drowned in 1997 while in Memphis recording his second album, his demos and live bootlegs have become fetish objects to fans and dandy folk-rock balladeers like Damien Rice and Gavin DeGraw. But the crooner's best work remains his 1994



Jeff Buckley
Invents Twister

debut, *Grace*. The art-blues bombast of "Mojo Pin," insistent roil of "Last Goodbye" and the regrettably missed booty call "Lover, You Should Have Come Over" push well past sequined cabaret, while his pained falsetto saturates a version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah." This edition contains 12 rarities that download-savvy devotees have probably heard. Hank Williams's "Lost Highway" and Nina Simone's "The Other Woman" reveal his good taste, and a toss-off of the MC5's "Kick Out

the Jams" suggests fun. But the payoff here is more likely the DVD, which contains live footage and an interview with the lost beauty.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD THESE "Lover, You Should Have Come Over," "Forget Her"

CAPONE-N-NOREAGA

THE BEST OF CAPONE-N-NOREAGA: THUGGED DA FUCK OUT ★★

TOMMY BOY/RHINO

Late-'90s Queens thugs rap about the darkness, do charity for the Neptunes

When someone with a bulletproof vest writes the secret history of New York thug-rap, Capone-N-Noreaga will get their own brutal, blood-dripping chapter. The Queens duo — Nore the unhinged, jumpy cannon, Capone the raspy-voiced realist — specialize in dour street tales, and accordingly, there's little joy on this best-of. "Bloody Money" is carried along by lonely, unadorned piano; "Phonetime" revisits the years Capone spent behind bars in the late '90s; and the devastating posse cuts "Banned From TV" and "Blood Money (Part 2)" are aggro crime-rap par excellence. The only optimistic moments come from Nore's solo career as a party

From top: Jeff Buckley/Outline; Shawn Montenegro/Outline

COOKING CANE

Brooklyn drug dealer cuts rap classic, dies three years later

THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.

READY TO DIE ★★

BAD BOY/UNIVERSAL

READY TO DIE is the kind of album that only seems stranger and more astonishing with every passing year. It starts with a this-is-your-life skit that compresses two decades into three minutes; then the beat drops and the rhymes start: a tough but playful voice telling stories that turn on a dime. No hip-hop album is better.

Gun-obsessed rappers had always known that the life they glamorized was dangerous, but B.I.G. took this notion further, disguising his brash debut album as a suicide note. The title track morphs from a promise to a threat: "The infrared's at your head real steady/You better grab your guns 'cause I'm ready/I'm ready to die."

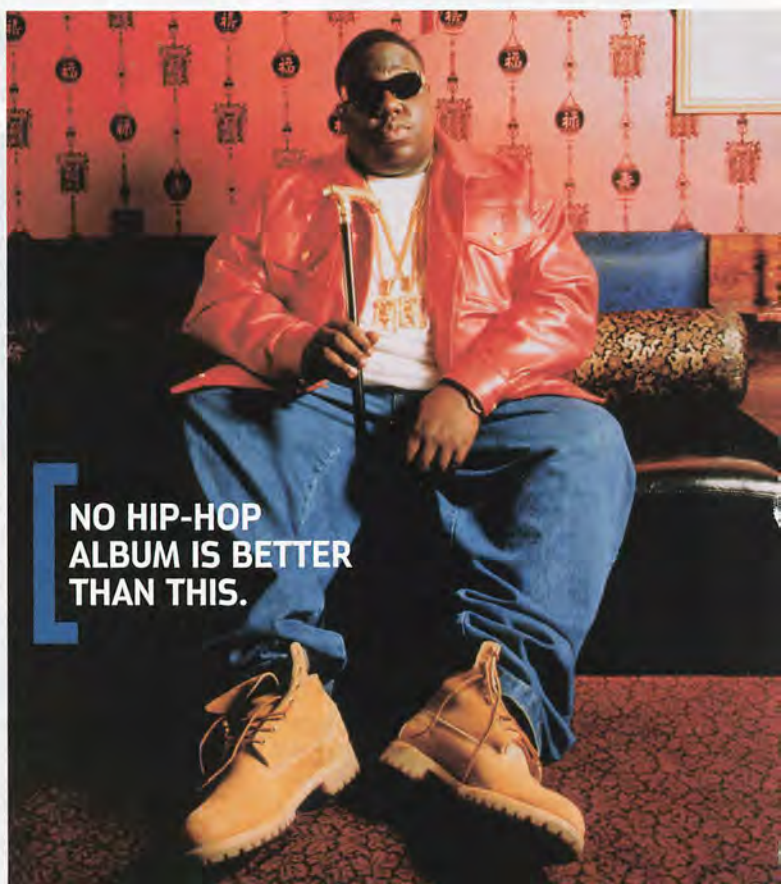
When *Ready to Die* was released in 1994, B.I.G. was a 22-year-old Brooklynite with a smooth and unusual style: his enjambment and stretched-out vowels created heavy counter-rhythms that pulled against the beat; his rhymes were even funkier than the tracks. In "Warning," he stages a phone

conversation (doing both voices himself) over a slow-rolling beat, perfecting the too-tough-to-be-mad attitude that rappers have imitated ever since.

After an hour of twisted love songs, disgusting skits and plush hit singles ("Big Poppa," "Juicy") guided by executive producer Sean "Puffy" Combs, B.I.G. finally shoots himself at the end of "Suicidal Thoughts," with Combs whimpering on the phone. (The sequence got a lot harder to listen to when B.I.G. was murdered in 1997.) But this remastered reissue brings him back for two more songs, "Dreams" and "Who Shot Ya?" (A second disc includes five videos.)

The mix-tape favorite "Dreams" is often called "Dreams of Fucking an R&B Bitch," which tells you all you need to know: Puffy apologizes in the background while B.I.G. describes his dreams — and a few slanderous nightmares. The underground classic "Who Shot Ya?" is all shivery menace, a song fragment as funny and as terrifying ("I can hear sweat trickling down your cheek/Your heartbeat sounds like Sasquatch feet") as anything he ever recorded. KELEFA SANNEH

DOWNLOAD THESE "Who Shot Ya?," "Juicy," "Gimme the Loot"



NO HIP-HOP ALBUM IS BETTER THAN THIS.



Patsy Cline:
"In the future,
everyone will wear
shoes like this."

thug, when he scored with the Neptunes-spanked "Oh No" and "Superthug." In the latter, the Neptunes' breakout hit, they channeled his manic rants into comic exuberance, but alongside Capone, Noreaga's a pure menace to society.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD THESE "Banned From TV," "N.O.R.E.," "Superthug"

VIC CHESNUTT

LITTLE ★★

WEST OF ROME ★★

DRUNK ★★

IS THE ACTOR HAPPY? ★★

NEW WEST

Iconoclastic art-folk wordsmith's conflicted portraits of his weird, troubled world

Vic Chesnutt was more interested in being Athens, Georgia's ornery town drunk when Michael Stipe of R.E.M. prodded him into the studio to record his 1990 debut, *Little*. Once there, though, raw, wry, hyperliterate folk tunes spilled out like catharsis, capturing Chesnutt in between his rural redneck past and his bohemian future. Two years later, on the less slapdash *West of Rome*, Chesnutt wrestles the elephant in the room: He's gripped by self-loathing over the 1982 drunk-driving accident that left him in a wheelchair, but startlingly confident in his pinched, squirrely voice. He toys with words, tweaking pronunciations, leaning too hard on certain syllables and drawing out untapped stores of rage, sadness and wit. *Drunk* was recorded the same year during a notorious bender: Flubbed notes and woozy tempos abound, but the writing remains sharp. The alt-country-leaning *Is the Actor Happy?*, from 1995, pins Chesnutt's tunes to smooth, accessible arrangements but loses some shabby beauty. There are dead ends among the ample outtakes, but with such a quirky

talent, that's to be expected — you never know which left turn leads in the right direction.

DAVID PEISNER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Soft Picasso," "Lucinda Williams," "Flying"

PATSY CLINE

THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION

★★★★★

MCA NASHVILLE

Country music's greatest female singer finally gets the best-of collection she deserves

Patsy Cline's soulful, precision-phrased twang was the perfect articulation of what became modern country. Unfortunately, her material was inconsistent and her production the all-too-perfect articulation of what provincial Nashville considered cosmopolitan. Believers go straight to the four-CD *Patsy Cline Collection*; skeptics are converted by the unbedizened *Live at the Cimarron Ballroom*. But this intelligently remastered collection from her brief early-'60s heyday buries the echo-laden *Patsy Cline Story* as the single-disc Cline of choice on audio alone. Not only that, the selection is an improvement — better "Half as Much" and "Lovesick Blues" than "South of the Border" and "Tra Le La Le La Triangle." As a bonus, the "Walkin' After Midnight" here is the 1957 one, from before

producer Owen Bradley saddled her with all those backup choruses.

ROBERT CHRISTGAU

DOWNLOAD THESE "Walkin' After Midnight," "Crazy," "I Fall to Pieces"

D.O.A.

WAR AND PEACE ★★

SUDDEN DEATH

Vancouver punks retrace their 25-year antiwar campaign

Since their 1978 debut, D.O.A. have deplored every outrage from disco to the World Trade Organization, but they keep returning to the subject of war. This 26-song retrospective includes "World War 3," "War in the East" and a thumping version of Edwin Starr's much-covered "War." While singer-guitarist Joey Keithley (a.k.a. Joey Shit-head) clearly modeled his band on the Clash, he and a changing cast of musicians — 25 lineups so far — have never come close to their *Sandinista!* The album's three reggaefied numbers are respectable, but stylistic growth isn't D.O.A.'s thing. Such galloping shout-alongs as "Race Riot" retain the sound of '78 — and the conviction to make it sound almost contemporary.

MARK JENKINS

DOWNLOAD THESE "World War 3," "Race Riot"

THE FALL

50,000 FALL FANS CAN'T BE WRONG: 39 GOLDEN GREATS ★★

BEGGARS BANQUET

Two-disc greatest-hits set from the Manchester smart-asses who made kazoos sound punk



Listening to Franz Ferdinand's take on late-'70s post-punk, you'd think the scene was all staccato guitars

and singers swathed in suave. But the Fall became cult luminaries — and have lasted 30 years — while sounding like an uncombed, untucked, underslept mess. Formed in 1976, they dismantled punk into gut-out, springs-popping disarray, shoving funkless beats and rambling tempos against garbled hissy fits. When he's not wheezing into a kazoo, Mark E. Smith's lyrics range from caffeine freak-outs to wage slaves breathing dirty air to secret government transmissions. Whether on beefy assaults (1979's "Rowche Rumble"), scrappy party-pumpers (1980's "Totally Wired"), catchy New Wave (1988's "Hit the North") or noisy rave-ups (2003's "Green Eyed Loco Man"), Smith's voice is a smokestack belching thick working-class sneers as he addresses the world with sarcasm, indignation and paranoia.

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Totally Wired," "Cruisers Creek," "Hit the North"

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TIFT MERRITT

TAMBOURINE

Tift Merritt's new album *Tambourine*, which includes eleven new original songs written by Tift, is the highly anticipated follow up to her critically acclaimed 2002 debut *Bramble Rose*. Produced by George Drakoulis, it features an all-star band including: Mike Campbell, Gary Louris, Maria McKee, Robert Randolph and Don Heffington as well as a full gospel choir and horn section.

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TIFT MERRITT TAMBOURINE

THE GUIDE REISSUES

PETER GREEN

MAN OF THE WORLD: THE ANTHOLOGY 1968-1988 ★★

SANCTUARY

Lost genius of the original Fleetwood Mac, once Jimmy Page's equal

When *Rumours* turned Fleetwood Mac into megastars in the mid-'70s, their first guitarist was living like a tramp. Peter Green left the band in 1970 after a drug-induced mental breakdown, and he drifted through spells in hospitals and jobs that included grave-digging. This was doubly sad, since he once rivaled Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page as a guitar hero of the British blues boom; the Beatles were such fans of his Fleetwood Mac track "Albatross" that they replicated it for *Abbey Road*'s "Here Comes the Sun King." You won't find "Albatross" here, however, while other Mac standouts such as "Black Magic Woman" and "Man of the World" are either live versions or alternate takes. The bulk of the double CD is given to various blues bands Green has played in over the last 30 years. The playing is tasteful and his vocals are quietly emotive, but nobody could pretend it represents the man at his best.

PAUL DU NOYER

DOWNLOAD THIS "Green Manalishi"

THE ISLEY BROTHERS

THE ESSENTIAL ISLEY BROTHERS ★★★★★

EPIC/LEGACY

Forty years of a New Jersey soul clan that mastered the toughest funk and the wussiest ballads

The Isley Brothers pioneered begging, a skill later appropriated by everyone from Al Green to Biggie Smalls (via sampling, but still). Frontman Ronald's

voice is thick and light all at once, fluttering atop electric-guitar soul (the Jimi Hendrix-inspired "That Lady") or grimy funk vamps ("It's Your Thing"). It also invigorates easy-listening R&B ("Summer Breeze," originally a hit for Seals & Croft), giving punch to lines that would merely wobble out of a lesser mouth. There's no filler on this double-disc set — even the disco relics ("Take Me to the Next Phase") are revelations. And while the backup Isleys are formidable (especially Ernie on guitar and drums), Ronald sounds not a day older on R. Kelly's 1995 pimp march "Down Low" than he did on 1975's "Make Me Say It Again Girl." The student should have learned a lesson from the teacher: Some beauty ages perfectly.

JON CARAMANICA

DOWNLOAD THESE "This Old Heart of Mine," "Between the Sheets," "Summer Breeze"

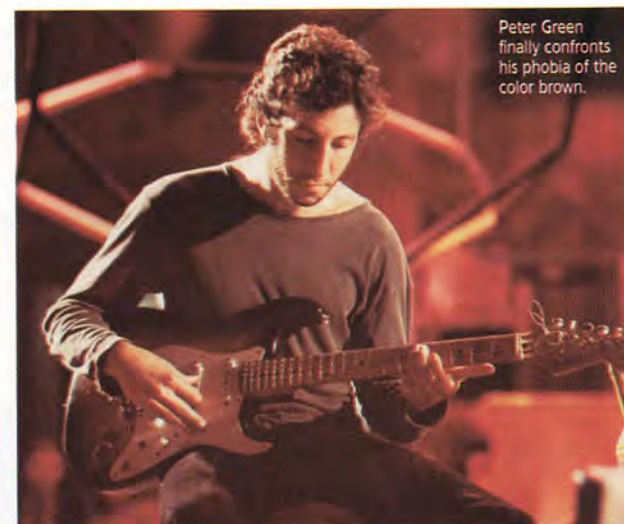
GEORGE JONES

THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION ★★★

MERCURY NASHVILLE

Country legend nicknamed "No Show" for erratic behavior, repackaged to confound careful consumers

As music, this collection of 22 remastered early recordings is magnificent even if you believe, like most non-purists, that George Jones, the greatest country singer ever, was just getting started in his straight honky-tonk period. It's terse, unsentimental and soul-deep; Jones's voice is a marvel and mystery long before its fathomless maturity. As product, however, this one's a 20-ounce Coke, a redundancy designed to simulate novelty and take up shelf space. True enough, Jones sounds maybe a quarter-quantum clearer and younger



Peter Green finally confronts his phobia of the color brown.



The Isley Brothers are "very excited" about the prom.

in these mixes. But 1994's two-CD *Cup of Loneliness: The Classic Mercury Years* covers the same ground (1955 to 1962), and its 29 additional cuts are as worthy as all but a few highlights here. Better notes, too. With artists of Jones's caliber, sometimes more is more.

ROBERT CHRISTGAL

DOWNLOAD THESE "White Lightning," "I'm Ragged but I'm Right," "She Thinks I Still Care"

LOW

A LIFETIME OF TEMPORARY RELIEF ★★★

CHAIRKICKERS

Retrospective box of the Quietest Power Trio in the World

When Low started 10 years ago, it seemed like a revolutionary idea for a band to play as slowly and quietly as it could. Thanks to Sigur Rós and the Black Heart Procession, among others, the Duluth, Minnesota, three-some's sound is now a little more familiar, but this box set (three discs of non-album tracks and a DVD of videos and short documentaries) shows how much mileage they've

gotten out of their subtle, devotional aesthetic. It flows like a scrapbook rather than a novel, but it portrays them as diligent experimenters and meticulous melodists who have been liberated by embracing restrictions. Some of their throwaway covers are eye-opening: Doing Soul Coughing's art-funk jam "Blue-Eyed Devil" proves they can turn anything into a Low song; doing Journey's karaoke staple "Open Arms" proves they've got more of a sense of humor than they get credit for.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE "Venus," "Sleep at the Bottom"

THE MAVERICKS

THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION ★★★

MCA NASHVILLE

Nashville's most unusual '90s hitmakers were from Miami

In Nashville, where country music is shaped by time-tested formulas, innovation is as rare as a heart that isn't cheating. That's why the Mavericks were so unusual and so



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PIXIES

DOOLITTLE

★★★★

4AD/ELEKTRA, 1989



Pixies laugh in the face of hay fever.

Before lead ranter Black Francis became Frank Black and bitter-voiced bassist Kim Deal formed the Breeders, they gave the alternative rock of the '90s most of its DNA with this joltingly dense, prickly album. A lot of its whisper-to-a-howl rockers were just slightly ahead of their time (Nirvana clearly picked up some tricks from "Tame"); in the 15 years between its release and the Boston quartet's recent reunion, though, even Doolittle's most violent spasms have come to sound like pop, or rather vice-versa.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE "Here Comes Your Man," "Debaser," "Wave of Mutilation"

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X

THE BEST: MAKE THE MUSIC GO BANG ★★

RHINO/ELEKTRA

THE MYTH OF punk rock is that it grew out of teen frustration. The truth is that it was as much a bohemian movement, stoked by arty primitivism and a taste for experimentation. In New York, that meant bands like Television and Talking Heads. In Los Angeles circa 1978, it meant the unlikely alliance of pros and amateurs that was X.

The band brought together John Doe and Exene Cervenka, a couple of post-Beat poet-singers who also

loved country, with a bleached-blond rockabilly guitarist, Billy Zoom, and an amiable jazz-rooted drummer, D.J. Bonebrake. If X were in high school, they would have been in separate cliques. Meanwhile, producer Ray Manzarek was the keyboardist from an earlier L.A. poet-rock sensation, the Doors.

X's version of punk was all about fractures. The keening blend of Doe's stolid but wired baritone and Cervenka's backwoods wail was a kind of harmony, though one frazzled by tension and instability, while Zoom's skewed Chuck Berry licks promised a connection to good old rock & roll but kept shorting out. Doe and Cervenka's

best lyrics went hurtling through tales of a bleak demimonde, coining durable aphorisms: "We're desperate/Get used to it," "Your phone's off the hook but you're not," "He gave me the once-over twice."

This is, amazingly, the first distilled anthology for a band that was once the apex of L.A. rock. *Beyond and Back*, an earlier collection, was mostly an assemblage of demos and alternate takes. *Make the Music Go Bang* spans 1978 to 1992 and tells a familiar story: derivative initial singles, crazed early inspiration, attempts to give a major label something more commercial and then, as other guitarists replaced Zoom, a disentangling of the styles the early songs smashed

together: country (with Doe and Cervenka working as the Knitters), folk-rock and hard rock. By 1993, X went political: Songs like "Country at War" are eerily

current again for another Bush administration.

The first disc makes the case for X's importance, the second for its members' persistence as rock gives way to reflection. But what X fans remember is the bohemian frenzy of the band's early years; for a five-star two-disc collection, pick up X's first two albums, *Los Angeles* and *Wild Gift*, instead. **JON PARELES**

DOWNLOAD THESE "We're Desperate," "The World's a Mess, It's in My Kiss"

X'S PUNK WAS ALL ABOUT FRACTURES.

precious. Led by Cuban-American Raul Malo, the Miami-based group played by Nashville's rules just enough to make slick, radio-friendly hits throughout the '90s, all the while subtly stirring in surprises. "Here Comes My Baby" and "Rancho Grande" meld Malo's smooth Roy Orbison crooning with rockabilly drive and exuberant Latin melodies; "From Hell to Paradise" sounds like a straightforward patriotic hymn until you realize it's about escape from Fidel Castro's republic of poverty. Not exactly "Blue Moon" — although, wouldn't you know, Malo does that one too, in a delicate Latin-lullaby version, making an ancient country standard fresh again.

BEN SISARIO

DOWNLOAD THESE "From Hell to Paradise," "O What a Thrill"

MEGADETH

PEACE SELLS... BUT WHO'S BUYING? ★★

SO FAR, SO GOOD... SO WHAT! ★★

RUST IN PEACE ★★

COUNTDOWN TO EXTINCTION ★★

YOUTHANASIA ★★

CRYPTIC WRITINGS ★★

RISK ★

CAPITOL

MD.45

THE CRAVING ★

CAPITOL

Killing is Megadeth's business — and business is so-so, as these reissues demonstrate

Back in the early '80s, when only Dave Mustaine's liver outsized his guitar chops, Megadeth's frontman challenged audience members to come onstage and fight him at gigs. Mustaine's drunk daring defined Megadeth at their best, as evidenced by reissues of most of the band's records, remixed to maximum volume and stuffed with demo cuts, rare tracks and, uh, a Spanish-language

version of the band's 1997 single "Trust." On 1986's speed-metal standard-bearer *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?* and its 1990 equal *Rust in Peace*, Megadeth bombarded longhairs with dual-guitar shredding that came on like sortie fire and lyrics that read as if they were penned by a bunch of dudes who had gotten high and read the Satanic Bible. Then Mustaine found God and lost his mind on increasingly silly albums (*Youthanasia*, *Cryptic Writings*) with inadvertently self-parodying songs ("She-Wolf," anyone?). Along the way, Megadeth dropped their most moody, emotional record (*So Far, So Good... So What!*) and scored their biggest hit with the more radio-friendly *Countdown to Extinction* before finally bottoming out on 1999's pop-metal mistake *Risk*. Even worse is Mustaine's regrettable 1996 pairing with Fear beer-belcher Lee Ving in the short-lived punk-metal disaster MD.45, who argued in song that "Nothing Is Something." Sometimes, nothing is merely nothing.

JASON BRACELIN

DOWNLOAD THESE "Peace Sells," "Holy Wars... the Punishment Due," "Symphony of Destruction"

ENNIO MORRICONE

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY SOUNDTRACK ★★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CAPITOL/EMI

Nearsighted genius from Italy shakes up film music

This score for the 1966 film that made a Hollywood star out of TV cowboy Clint Eastwood established Ennio Morricone, its conservatory-trained Roman composer, as the Elvis Presley of soundtracks, a genius popularizer in enormous black glasses who brought rock guitars and jazz feistiness to a job that had been staidly symphonic. Morricone's music evokes the story's brio and danger with such presence and command that ever since, rockers, hip-hopsters and dance creators have borrowed, quoted and remixed its fine mesh of *Guns, Smoke* and Verdi. The main



title theme sounds the eerie eight-note clarion that hovers atop the other instrumentals, including slower summits such as "Il Forte." The expanded reissue unearths 10 previously unreleased pieces that make this 21-track re-mastered presentation sound more vital than ever.

JAMES HUNTER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Il Buono Il Brutto Il Cattivo (Titoli)," "Il Forte," "La Carrozza dei Fantasmii"

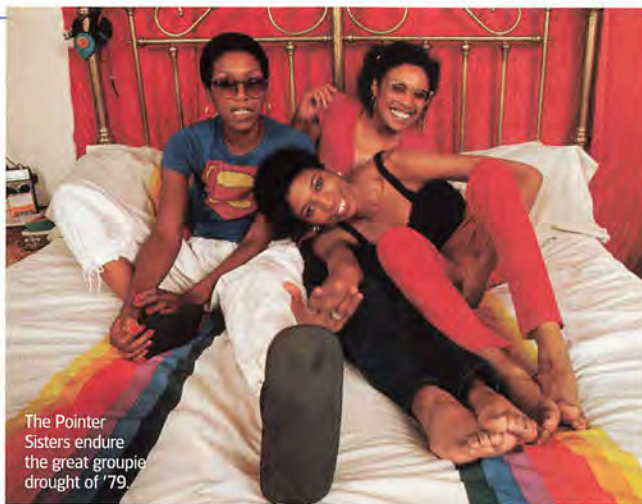
THE POINTER SISTERS

THE BEST OF THE POINTER SISTERS: THE MILLENNIUM COLLECTION ★★★★★

HIP-0/MCA

The peculiar two-part career of an Oakland act of real sisters

In the mid- and late 1970s, before they (and the rest of the pop world) discovered leg warmers, the Pointer Sisters were a versatile and adventurous pop-soul group whose taste encompassed everything from psychedelic R&B to blues to disco to country ballads. Their hits "How Long (Betcha Got a Chick on the Side)" — a delirious funk anthem whose chorus is whispered and hissed, not sung — and the torrid gospel-soul



The Pointer Sisters endure the great groupie drought of '79.

"Going Down Slowly" rate with the finest music from that golden period of black pop. Today, the Pointers are best known for their synth-soaked '80s output, a string of tacky period-piece hits of which only one, the slinky "Slow Hand," bears remembering. Thankfully, this collection leans heavily toward the '70s — it's a welcome reminder of trippy eccentricity (a disco track with a banjo solo) in the years before the Pointers teased out their hair and fell for the Yamaha DX-7 synthesizer.

JODY ROSEN

DOWNLOAD THESE "How Long (Betcha Got a Chick on the Side)," "Going Down Slowly," "You Gotta Believe"

REO SPEEDWAGON

THE ESSENTIAL REO SPEEDWAGON ★★★★★

EPIC/LEGACY

Illinois poodlehead superstars set the high-water mark for corporate '70s falsetto-rock

In a better world, the essential singles of REO Speedwagon would include "Anarchy in the U.K.," "London's Burning" and "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" — the songs the world coughed up after choking on the Midwestern band's insanely competent corporate rock. But

someone had to perfect "Don't mind my business suit, dude; I get crazy on the weekend" bombast, and REO Speedwagon made prime rock-by-numbers. Still, even if they soundtracked lame romances and rock-climbing trips better than their Top 40 competitors Styx and Journey combined, their mid-career masterpieces needn't be split across two discs; they could easily boil down to one with room to burn for essential Kansas. Instead, you'll be filled on filler and missing Boston before croonin' Kevin Cronin takes it on the run and keeps on lovin' you.

RENE VIENT

DOWNLOAD THESE "Take It on the Run," "Time for Me to Fly"

I LOVE THIS CD!



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PAUL SIMON

THE STUDIO RECORDINGS
1972–2000 ★★★★★

WARNER BROS.

Comprehensive collection sets Baby Boomer alienation to spry melodies

Paul Simon has made nine studio albums since his 1970 split with Art Garfunkel. Here they all are in one nice box, or in two smaller boxes split chronologically. In the latter case, you'll want the early box for sweet songs of intelligent anxiety ("50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," "Still Crazy After All These Years") or the later box for splashy adventures in global music ("The Boy in the Bubble," "The Obvious Child"). You can also buy the albums individually, with scant demo-version extra tracks — *There Goes Rhyming*. Simon is the most melodic and *Graceland*, recorded mainly in South Africa, the most ambitious. Avoid the doo-wop-flavored stage show *Songs From The Capeman*, and you won't go very far wrong. Rare are the writers who can be so brainy and candid while remembering that a great tune is the most telling message of all.

PAUL DU NOYER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Something So Right," "Take Me to the Mardi Gras," "Graceland"

TALKING HEADS

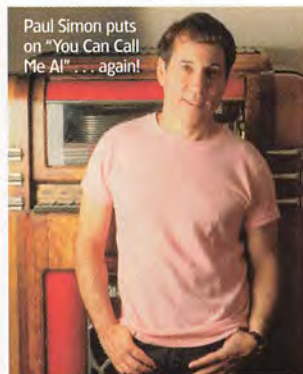
THE BEST OF TALKING HEADS
★★★★★

THE NAME OF THIS BAND IS
TALKING HEADS ★★★★★

SIRE/WARNER BROS./RHINO

America's twitchiest groove band, live and in the studio

Starting with their 1977 debut, Talking Heads went through three distinct phases (uptight New Wave, chattering funk, eccentric Americana), which makes for uneven anthologizing, but their single-disc best-of is so packed with underground hits that it's hard to



Paul Simon puts on "You Can Call Me Al" ... again!

complain. *The Name of This Band Is Talking Heads*, a long-out-of-print 1982 release making its first CD appearance (with its contents nearly doubled), documents their live incarnations from the first two phases. As early as 1977's "Who Is It?", you can hear the New York quartet catching on to the hip-shaking possibilities of their rhythm section, although David Byrne's frantic-nerd persona is still center stage. By the second disc's shows, taken from 1980 and 1981, they've expanded their lineup to a freaky 10-piece groove machine, incorporating backup divas and unexpected noise. The momentous band stretches out and jams, both

celebrating and escaping the band's trademark anxiety.

DOUGLAS WOLK

DOWNLOAD THESE "Once in a Lifetime," "Mind," "Cities"

ULTRAMAGNETIC MC'S

CRITICAL BEATDOWN ★★★★★

NEXT PLATEAU

Remastered debut from Bronx oddities who shot hip-hop into outer space

It sounds like a *Mad* TV skit: In 1988, four b-boys bought a \$700 mic, covered a room in silver wallpaper and wrote rhymes cribbed from "UFO books, satellite books" and back issues of *Popular Mechanics*. Peaking at number 57 on the R&B/rap charts, *Critical Beatdown* became a prestige item among crate-diggers and devotees of underground star Kool Keith's brilliantly deranged flow — but this expanded version proves it deserved more. Contemporary with Public Enemy's Bomb Squad, Ced Gee's production is a similar stew of crackling breakbeats and funk blare (many samples here cropped up later on hits by Dr. Dre, Biggie and Wu-Tang). Kool Keith was a far less focused MC than

I LOVE THIS CD!

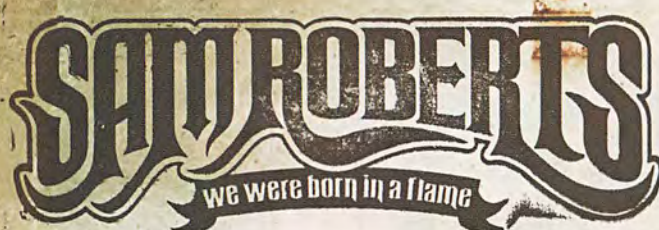


HUGH DANCY
ACTOR IN
KING ARTHUR

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
THE WILD, THE INNOCENT & THE E STREET SHUFFLE
COLUMBIA

"It was the first CD that I bought with my own money, and I still listen to it constantly."

From top: Lynn Goldsmith/Corbis; John Spellman/Rena Ltd



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Chuck D, but far more rhythmically adventurous and far funnier — which helps when one of your best battle rhymes boasts that you're "controlled by gamma light."

JONAH WEINER

DOWNLOAD THESE "Ego Trippin'," "Give the Drummer Some," "Ease Back"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

THE JACKSONS' STORY ★★★★★

HIP-OP/UTV

Three decades of music's greatest, craziest family — but where are Janet and LaToya?

This first comprehensive collection of Jackson family hits traces their chart-making history from the kiddie R&B of the Jackson 5's 1969 debut, "I Want You Back," right up to just before Michael went Jacko with his world-pop domination, Webster-toting and excessive video grape-grabbing. Tapping oft-compiled J5 singles such as "The Love You Save" and the rump-shaker "Dancing Machine," it dispenses with mid-'70s fluke hits and hustles straight into the disco era with the Jacksons' sweaty "Shake Your Body" and the cheerily naughty "Blame It on the Boogie." Brother Jermaine's career gets a footnote with his best song, the Stevie Wonder-penned "Let's Get Serious" (what, no "Let Me Tickle Your Fancy"?), and the album-ending "Don't Stop Till You Get Enough" and "Billie Jean" celebrate Michael's pre-surgery superstardom, which snuffed the family's onstage unity.

LAURA SINAGRA

DOWNLOAD THESE "I Want You Back," "Shake Your Body"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW BETTER: 15 YEARS OF MERGE RECORDS ★★★★★

MERGE

Stalwart indie label assembles stellar guest list for fifteenth-birthday party

Founded by Mac McCaughan and Laura Ballance of North Carolina indie-punk stalwarts Superchunk way back before Geffen discovered grunge, Merge Records has evolved from a beacon of DIY distribution into the most keen-eared and joyously eclectic of indie labels. This bulging birthday compilation — two discs of not-too-obvious favorites, one of rarities new and old — scans like a semisecret history of '90s rock: twangy curmudgeons (M. Ward, the great Lambchop), twee-pop wimps (the Clientele, Camera Obscura), spiky art-rockers (Spoon, Polvo), born-again post-punk daddies (Buzzcocks, the Clean), acid-folk neohippies (Essex Green, Ladybug Transistor), wise-ass one-man polymaths (Magnetic Fields, Destroyer). The sheer variety of the guest list is impressive, and the quality



FYI: Dionne Warwick is a terrible ventriloquist.

control is high: 61 tracks, and hardly a single one you'd kick off an iPod.

DENNIS LIM

DOWNLOAD THESE The Clientele, "I Want You" More Than Ever"; Lambchop, "Your Fucking Sunny Day"; Spoon, "Anything You Want"

VARIOUS ARTISTS

TRAX RECORDS 20TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION ★★★★★

TRAX

Chicago label celebrates an overlooked chapter in black-music history

House music was never really meant to last. Cheaply recorded, minimal and

repetitious, released by a poverty-stricken label that pressed its records on recycled vinyl, the tracks compiled here had no loftier intention than to move the drug-addled dance floors of Chicago's gay clubs in the late '80s. Although they were ignored by the American mainstream, records such as Phuture's "Acid Tracks" and Mr. Fingers' "Washing Machine" sparked a musical revolution in Europe. Their propulsive, slightly sinister yet oddly funky Kraftwerk-goes-disco clanking led directly to rave, techno, big beat and all the endless permutations of dance music. What's surprising about this triple-disc set is how grippingly current much of it still sounds — which is

certainly proof that genuine innovation never goes out of style.

JAMES SLAUGHTER

DOWNLOAD THESE Ralphi Rosario featuring Xavier Gold, "You Used to Hold Me"; Marshall Jefferson, "Move Your Body"

DIONNE WARWICK

PROMISES, PROMISES/ I'LL NEVER FALL IN LOVE AGAIN ★★★★★

RHINO

The original smooth-soul girl mixes Broadway and Beatles



By the time Scepter Records released Dionne Warwick's *Promises, Promises* at the end of 1968 and *I'll Never Fall in Love Again* in 1970, the explosively innovative collaboration between the singer and her songwriting producers, Burt Bacharach and Hal David, was tailing off. Both albums, re-issued as a twofer, have title songs from the score of the Bacharach-David hit Broadway show *Promises, Promises*, plus pop and show-tune warhorses by the Beatles, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Jimmy Webb and others. Although the tumbling rush of pop-soul passion that infused Warwick's classic hits of the six previous years had slowed, a good deal of the old magic remains.

STEPHEN HOLDEN

DOWNLOAD THESE "Who Is Gonna Love Me?", "Whoever You Are, I Love You"

DWIGHT YOAKAM

THE VERY BEST OF DWIGHT YOAKAM ★★★★★

RHINO/REPRISE

An urban cowboy so cool, he dated Sharon Stone and covered Queen

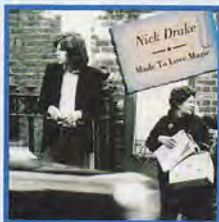
It may be hard to imagine, but country was cool as recently as two decades ago. Dwight Yoakam's fifth compilation CD begins in 1986, when he joined a handful of twang-loving mavericks — Steve Earle, Lyle Lovett, Rosanne Cash, Rodney Crowell — in bum-rushing the Nashville charts. Yoakam's sound owed as much to L.A.'s rockabilly revival and cow-punk as it did country, and with guitarist Pete Anderson, he forged a swaggering, hard-as-nails brand of honky-tonk. The Kentucky-born singer's swoon-worthy croon would've ensured success as a balladeer ("Ain't That Lonely Yet"), but when he kicks up the hillbilly dust on "Guitars, Cadillacs" and "Long White Cadillac," he bottles white lightning. As his most comprehensive one-disc overview, this solidifies the notion that Yoakam isn't a mere revivalist but the one traditionalist daring enough to embrace Queen's "Crazy Little Thing Called Love."

GREG KOT

DOWNLOAD THESE "Little Sister," "Guitars, Cadillacs," "Long White Cadillac"

BLENDER APPROVED

The best REISSUES of the last three months



NICK DRAKE

MADE TO LOVE MAGIC

ISLAND

Fantastic outtakes — and one unreleased track — from the brooding Brit folk boy genius who overdosed on antidepressants in 1974.



HOUND DOG TAYLOR

RELEASE THE HOUND

ALLIGATOR

In love with good times and slide guitar, Taylor played dirtier, fuzzier blues than any of his contemporaries — he's captured here in intense live performance.



AL GREEN

CALL ME

THE RIGHT STUFF/EMI

On this 1973 career peak, the Arkansas-born soul master becomes the loverman supreme, a master of subtle seduction.



VARIOUS ARTISTS

CRUNK CLASSICS

TVT

This collection traces the history of crunk, long before Lil Jon broke through: He, Three 6 Mafia and Trick Daddy are roaring highlights.

GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OTHER FUN STUFF
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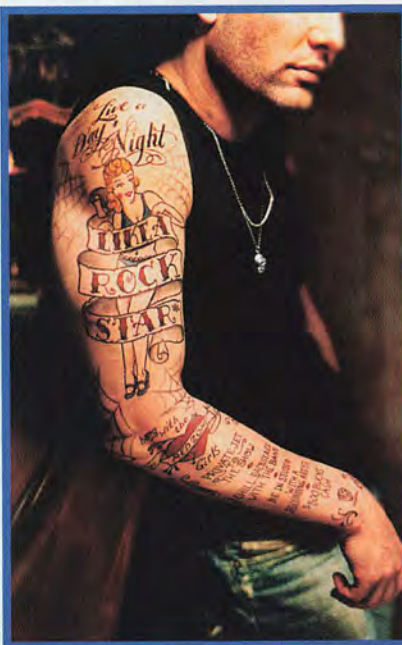
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REISSUES IN BRIEF BY JON YOUNG



Elvis Presley orders another box of pills.

DAVIE ALLAN & THE ARROWS

DEVIL'S RUMBLE: ANTHOLOGY '64-'68
★★★★

SUNDazed

Allan started out playing tame surf guitar instrumentals, then found his niche creating trashy scores for the sleazy B-movies *Wild in the Streets* and *Teenage Rebellion*. His sputtering fuzz-tone puts a charge into the sullen rockers "Action on the Street" and "Blue's Theme," though Allan never seems really evil — just grumpy.

THE CARTER FAMILY

RCA COUNTRY LEGENDS ★★★★★

RCA NASHVILLE/BMG HERITAGE

Alvin Pleasant Carter and his Virginia kin helped define country music with these '20s and '30s recordings, re-tooling already ancient tunes for the marketplace. Their dry, dour harmonies and sparse guitar picking don't exactly spell big fun today, but "Wildwood Flower" and "Worried Man Blues" are landmarks, embedded in America's cultural DNA.

DEEP FOREST

THE ESSENCE OF THE FOREST
★★★★

EPIC LEGACY

The brainchild of weirdo world-music buffs Eric Mouquet and Michel Sanchez, Deep Forest combine airy dance grooves and wildly eclectic vocal samples of everyone from pygmies to gypsies to aborigines. Thanks to a light touch, what could be a cheesy gimmick is strangely, surreally beautiful. The swirling "Undecided," sung by Neneh Cherry and Youssou N'Dour, could cause vertigo.



Herman's Hermits: Now *that's* a gay wedding!

HERMAN'S HERMITS

RETROSPECTIVE ★★★★★

ABKCO

Fronted by cutie-pie Peter Noone, Herman's Hermits were among the fluffiest of British Invasion bands, making the Beatles sound like Slipknot. The chirpy hits "Mrs. Brown, You've Got a Lovely Daughter" and "I'm Henry VIII, I Am" have the sinister appeal of great junk food — overconsumption may cause feelings of guilt and shame.

KARA'S FLOWERS

THE FOURTH WORLD ★★★★★

REPRISE/RHINO

Back before they were on MTV rolling naked on a bed, four-fifths of Maroon 5 were Kara's Flowers, and they recorded this wimpy, sporadically sexy power-pop in 1997. "Sleepy Wind-breaker" has a sugary, Rooney-ish allure; "To Her, With Love" reflects the influence of Paul McCartney. While the lyrics are mostly drivel, "Teddy Ruxpin is a whore" wins points for nerve.

ELVIS PRESLEY

ELVIS AT SUN ★★★★★

RCA

Endless repackaging cannot dull the brilliance of Presley's first and best recordings. Although his 1954-'55 sessions lit the fuse of rock & roll by mixing black and white sounds, forget history. Instead, note how he deftly portrays emotional extremes — of tenderness ("Blue Moon") and aggression ("Milkcow Blues Boogie") — and already realizes how damn great he is.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

CHICAGO SOUL ★★★★★

SOUL JAZZ

After dominating electric blues and discovering Chuck Berry in the '50s, what did Chess Records do in the '60s? A bit of everything: art-rock (Rotary Connection's "Memory Band"), pop-jazz (Soulful Strings' "Burning Spear") and hard R&B (Etta James's "Tell Mama"). Weirdest of all is the hypnotic "Soul Vibrations," featuring Dorothy Ashby's harp (the stringed instrument, not the harmonica).

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS



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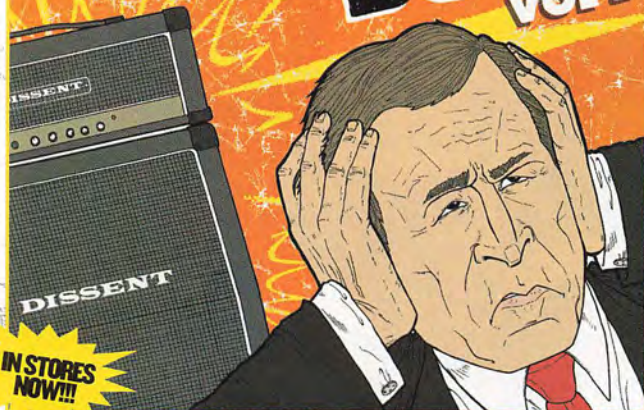
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fatwreck.com



punkvoter.com

IGGY POP



As James Osterberg grew up in a Detroit-area trailer home, the son of a schoolteacher dad and office-worker mom, the road ahead was clear: a life of crawling through broken glass onstage and pulling out his huge schlong.

The frontman of the Stooges dubbed himself "Iggy" because "it's the kind of name that when shouted across a room makes nice people wince." Taking on hippiedom in the late '60s, he was a one-man wrecking crew whose shows featured violence and threats — and an infamous new kind of noise that would later be called punk rock.

Going solo in the mid-'70s, he still sang brutal assessments of boredom and restlessness in a scalding rasp of a voice. Later he got showbizzy and sarcastic, but even now, at 57, he still looks ripped. And he's still kind of scary. By RJ Smith



BLENDER APPROVED

THE STOOGES THE STOOGES ELEKTRA, 1969 ★★★★★



The Stooges came out the week of the Woodstock festival, bringing hate to a nation wallowing in all that love. With Ron Asheton's slashing guitar and tune after tune of psychedelic drones, this record revived the icon of the juvenile delinquent, keeping it alive for the Sex Pistols (who covered "No Fun") and Johnny Depp. **Download these:** "1969," "No Fun," "I Wanna Be Your Dog"

THE STOOGES RAW POWER COLUMBIA, 1973 ★★★★★



The Stooges sold few records, critics hated them and Pop had discovered heroin. Elektra dropped them after two albums, and he broke up the band. But lifelong advocate

David Bowie brought them back together with newcomer James Williamson on guitar, and Pop fooled everybody with his first brilliant comeback. Compared to the debut's total destruction, this is a little more concise and professional — though also gloomy, as the song titles tell: "Death Trip," "Your Pretty Face Is Going to Hell." **Download these:** "Search and Destroy," "Gimme Danger," "Penetration"

IGGY POP & JAMES WILLIAMSON KILL CITY BOMP, 1977 ★★★★★



Pop had a breakdown during these 1975 sessions (which were later retouched for release) and entered the studio on week-end furloughs from a mental institution.

Whether mental illness helped or hurt, he cut an amazing series of songs. Yes, songs — the idea here was to show that he wasn't just about rawness, performance and spreading peanut butter on his naked chest. These smaller-scale tunes show there's more than one way to corrupt a nation. **Download these:** "Kill City," "Johanna," "I Got Nothin"

GREAT

THE STOOGES FUN HOUSE ELEKTRA, 1970 ★★★★



On their second album, the Stooges wanted to capture the tumult of their savage live shows. In an age of elaborate art-rock, this sounded almost incomprehensibly

basic. Saxophonist Steve Mackay added a free-jazz skronk. "That was a great album," Pop later said. "People hated it." **Download these:** "Loose," "TV Eye," "1970"

THE STOOGES METALLIC KO SKYDOG, 1976 ★★★★



This is their savage live show, recorded just before they broke up for the second time in 1974. Pop was feuding with a local biker gang, and you can hear hurled

bottles shatter on the stage. It's the Stooges at their most provocative. **Download these:** "I Got Nothin," "Rich Bitch," "Cock in My Pocket"

IGGY POP THE IDIOT RCA, 1977 ★★★★



David Bowie took him in like a stray, leading to Pop's second brilliant comeback. They ditched Pop's punk bandmates and moved to Berlin (a great place to clean up!). The album

lan Curtis of Joy Division was listening to when he hanged himself, this one goes down, down, down. **Download these:** "Funtime," "Nightclubbing," "Dum Dum Boys"

IGGY POP LUST FOR LIFE RCA, 1977 ★★★★



This second collaboration with Bowie goes up, up, up, with a playful, Euro-cabaret note. Sexy, daft — "Of course I've had it in the ear before" — with the high-energy "Lust for Life," beloved by movie directors (*Trainspotting*) and ad makers. **Download this:** "The Passenger"

CHECK IT OUT

IGGY POP NEW VALUES ARISTA, 1979 ★★★



Pop left Berlin and put together a new sound, clipped and rocking and fun like a bumper car. Scott Thurston plays squalid guitar, and Pop recovers his vigor. It's the first indication that whatever his mental state, he could go on doing this for years. **Download these:** "New Values," "Five Foot One"

IGGY POP BLAH BLAH BLAH A&M, 1986 ★★★



Pop and Bowie get back together — and shockingly, they sound relaxed. Pop hoped to prove he could "offer the public more than a warped celebration of sex, drugs and dissipation." This record sold more than any album he had ever made. **Download this:** "Real Wild Child"

IGGY POP BEAT EM UP VIRGIN, 2002 ★★★



By now, he was so old that he'd taken up golfing — but at least he was holding a big club. Pop comes out with yammering, vicious badgering, like an old guy having a historically bad day. "Where is the love?" he screams. Not here, buddy. **Download these:** "Mask," "It's All Shit"

IGGY POP SKULL RING VIRGIN, 2003 ★★★



Nearly 30 years after they had last played together, ex-Stooges Ron and Scott Asheton forgive Pop for calling them the "Dum Dum Boys" and bring the squal on four tracks. Sum 41 and Green Day bring the kind of hooks and studio smarts the Stooges always disdained. Sure, 17 songs is too many. Still, this one feels like home. **Download these:** "Little Electric Chair," "Skull Ring"

BE CAREFUL

IGGY POP SOLDIER ARISTA, 1980 ★★★



A no-brain punk-rock slog from one end to the other. Ex-Pistol Glen Matlock plays bass throughout, Bowie guests (in his disco mode) and even — huh? — Brit New Wave's Simple Minds appear on a track. Pop's pro-America feelings (he endorsed Ronald Reagan for president, though Reagan won anyway) are right up front. **Download this:** "I'm a Conservative"

IGGY POP ZOMBIE BIRDHOUSE ANIMAL, 1982 ★★★



Placing himself in the hands of Blondie guitarist Chris Stein, Pop looks for fresh ways to be raw and poetic. The album was recorded in the toughed-up Brooklyn neighborhood of Bensonhurst, where lots of people are named Iggy. **Download this:** "Bulldozer"

IGGY POP INSTINCT A&M, 1988 ★★★



Pop endured detox in L.A. shortly before making this fussy, programmed noise, but surviving producer Bill Laswell might have been more of an ordeal. This is a metal move, as Laswell turns guitarist Steve Jones's playing into a wall of dark wah-wah. One more false step on Pop's journey to find fresh ways of keeping it raw. **Download these:** "Cold Metal," "Tom Tom"

IGGY POP AVENUE B VIRGIN, 1999 ★★★



His 10-year marriage had fallen apart, which he addresses with cryptic darkness and good humor. This trendy, arty record works shockingly well. Who'd have thought he'd do spoken-word or orchestration by film composer Howard Shore? **Download this:** "Nazi Girlfriend"

FOR FANS ONLY

IGGY POP PARTY ARISTA, 1981 ★



Right at the moment when Clive Davis's record label demanded a hit, Pop made a New Wave record, laying a godawful low-register croon across this misfire. "Bang Bang" was a small hit, but Pop moans when he should be wailing, and the early-rock covers — "Sea of Love," "Time Won't Let Me" — are confusing. **Download this:** "Bang Bang"

IGGY POP BRICK BY BRICK VIRGIN, 1990 ★



Don Was, a producer known for giving new direction to old geezers including Bonnie Raitt, gets Pop a hit here, "Candy." This has some big names on it — Guns N' Roses' Slash and Duff McKagan; the B-52s' Kate Pierson. But *Brick by Brick*, a sort of concept piece about America in decline, itself sounds in decline. **Download these:** "Butt Town," "Candy"

IGGY POP AMERICAN CAESAR VIRGIN, 1993 ★



When in doubt, put *American* in your title — it sounds ambitious. This one's got the song "Wild in America," too, but it's not very ambitious. "Mixin' the Colors" is a misplaced "can't we all get along?" plea. There is a smart rewrite of "Louie Louie" that beats the cover on *Metallic KO*. **Download this:** "Plastic and Concrete"

IGGY POP NAUGHTY LITTLE DOGGIE VIRGIN, 1996 ★



Uninspired riff-rock made with his traveling band, the F'ckups. "Look Away" is a low-key remembrance of the New York Dolls' Johnny Thunders, another punk pioneer and drug user. **Download this:** "I Wanna Live"

FURTHER LISTENING

NUDE AND RUDE: THE BEST OF IGGY POP VIRGIN, 1996 ★★★

A well-done 17-cut best-of spanning more than three decades, this includes "I'm Sick of You" and "Kill City," songs that came out (barely) on the indie label Bomp. Also features Pop's version of "China Girl," a song he cowrote with Bowie. **DOWNLOAD THESE:** "Candy," "I'm Sick of You," "China Girl"

IGGY POP TV EYE RCA, 1978 ★★★

More live jive, this time recorded on the tour Pop did following two albums with Bowie. While the sound quality isn't so hot, it's better than on *Metallic KO*. But then, what isn't? **DOWNLOAD THESE:** "I Wanna Be Your Dog," "Nightclubbing"

FURTHER READING

I NEED MORE: THE STOOGES AND OTHER STORIES BY IGGY POP

KARZ-COHL, 1982
★★★★

Dozens of disjointed vignettes, this autobiography reads like a transcription of a guy talking into a tape recorder, yet it's still riveting. There are even baby pictures — ooh, cute! If you want to know what it was like living with Velvet Underground singer Nico, or how Pop lost his virginity, it's here. If you want to know what really happened between him and Bowie, though, that's a story yet to be told.

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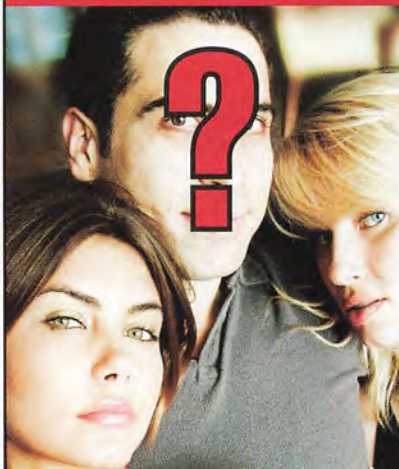
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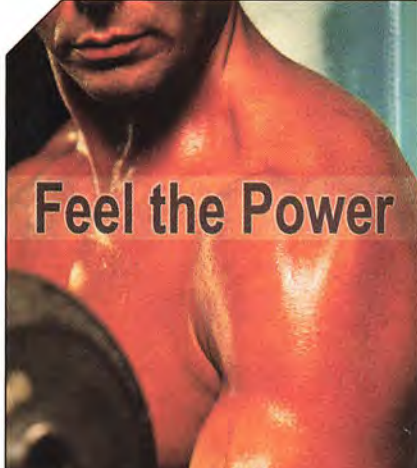
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Madonna: "Hey, who stole my stripper's pole?"

NOW SHE'S GOT A BAGPIPER!

Star of David

The Kabbalah queen busts out her inner Material Girl

MADONNA

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK

JUNE 23, 2004 ★★★★★

NOW WE KNOW what it takes to make Madonna apologize. Looking as ripped as an Eastern European javelin thrower, she's singing "Mother and Father" in the stretch run of her set, the fifth of six concerts at Madison Square Garden, and as she gets to the spoken part of this flatly autobiographical recounting of her mother's death and her rage against her father, she stumbles over the words, she forgets them and reddens.

"I need subtitles," she tells 14,716 fabulously groomed or grubby grownups. Then — there's

a first time for everything — Madonna says she's sorry.

Who could blame her for being confused? The "Re-Invention" tour — a greatest-hits retrospective mixed with a circus, then laid on top of a Broadway musical and pile-driven into an Olympic opening ceremony — is so overwhelming and overloaded, even she can't quite follow along.

After you've been the world's biggest star, a mother, an author, a scourge and Vanilla Ice's girlfriend, what else is there to do but finally turn around and look behind you? Cynics can point out that this two-hour cavalcade of deep hits and a few errors follows last year's release of *American Life*, Madonna's worst and worst-selling album, a failure that has tempted some to



"... and that's why I married Guy Ritchie."

declare her career over (a prediction heard regularly since 1992).

She's even singing "Material Girl," which she swore she'd never do again, and the tour is expected to gather \$120 million, more than any other this year. It's as though she's showing Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, her flailing spiritual stepchildren and spin-the-bottle buddies, how a real star sustains her career.

As she looks back on her career at 45, Madonna sees nothing less than everything. In one of the show's totally gay-tastic spectacles, a skateboarder rides a half-pipe across the stage as a dancer in white tie tap-dances past a hopping breakdancer and a belly-dancer in full Middle Eastern costume. At other times, on a stage that never stops moving and expanding, the entertainment includes nuns and a bagpiper (none of them authentic, unless ancient Scots wore wife-beaters with their kilts), fire handlers, rifle choreography and some election-year Hollywood politics in the form of an "American Life" video scene of George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein look-alikes embracing. Her gift is not for creating tidy coherence but for igniting a provocative sprawl and leaving others to clean it up or put it out.

And now that she has run out of Catholics to annoy, Madonna has moved on to the Jews,

NUNS, POLITICS, FIRE, GUNS AND HIT SONGS.

studying Kabbalah and asking to be called "Esther." There are Hebrew letters broadcast on the LED video screens and a red Kabbalah bracelet on her left wrist, and her male dancers wrap themselves in *teffilin*, the black arm bindings used by Orthodox Jews (which is odd, because with names like Sean, Mihran and Reshma, the dancers are likely not Jewish). The only thing missing from this multicultural marketplace is some Romans and a lion. It must be hard to get a lion to tour.

It's always been easy to forget the best thing about Madonna: her music. She ruthlessly reexamines many of her songs, whether striking a yoga pose (a full wheel) to "Vogue," the opening song, letting her guitarist lace a rock-concert solo in "Burning Up," the 1983 song where she warned, "I'm not the same/I have no shame," or quieting "Deeper and Deeper," her most rapturous dance track, into a melancholy, swinging ballad.

The set hops between live performance and prerecorded tracks — for Madonna, electronic music is no less "real" than acoustic — and she encourages the crowd in a put-on British accent so broad, she sounds like Eliza Doolittle in the opening scenes of *My Fair Lady*. She follows the mangled "Mother and Father" with a cover of John Lennon's "Imagine" ("The words are so beautiful," she says, "and one day they'll become a reality"), a plea for peace that's equally about idealism, collective power and the self-aggrandizement of stardom.

Even if her recent price-of-fame laments bring her closer to the work of grumpy Beatle George Harrison, "Imagine" seems like a perfect song for Madonna in her spiritual-Gap-spokesmodel stage, if only because so many devout Baby Boomers are horrified that she would blacken Lennon's name by singing it.

The encore is a buffet of mid-'80s hits, including "Into the Groove," an industrialized "Papa Don't Preach," "Crazy for You" and "Holiday." Madonna celebrates abandon and imagination, promising they lead to rewards greater than cold hard cash or a soy latte: renewal, mutual love, the everlasting feeling of virginity. The cover of "Imagine" is unnecessary; it doesn't say anything she hasn't been saying for 20 years, and always with a better beat. **ROB TANNENBAUM**

John Shearer (2)

high tide



low tide

Please Drink Responsibly

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The Shins, from left: Dave Hernandez, Jesse Sandoval, Marty Crandall, James Mercer



Joe Schmoes

Brainy, pale and shy, the Shins are unlikely rock heroes

THE SHINS

HOUSE OF BLUES, CHICAGO

JUNE 19, 2004 ★★★★★

ON THEIR SECOND album, *Chutes Too Narrow*, the Shins are way likeable: engagingly wispy, their music full of melodic curlicues and tracings in the sky. Since its release last October, the band — four young, thoughtful guys, cute in an uncombed way, who came together in remote Albuquerque, New Mexico — have emerged as the bright hopes of indie-rock. Singer-guitarist James Mercer's songs are frail examinations of failed relationships, perfect for the living room, but they make you wonder if his band can stand up to a strong breeze, let alone the kind of pressure brought on by great reviews, college airplay and a full house on a Saturday night.

As the Shins drove up to the House of Blues in Chicago for their two-night stand, they saw the

club's marquee. "It said SOLD OUT," Mercer says. "Coming right after us were D12, and they weren't sold out yet. We were shocked!"

Sporting three-day stubble and clutching beer bottles, the Shins sure look like they have a weight on their shoulders. Mr. Fire Marshal must have gone fishing today; the club is packed shoulder-to-shoulder. The crowd stands a lot closer together than the band, which shuffles around onstage half-oblivious to one another. A couple of songs in, they're not getting much traction; keyboardist/guitarist Marty Crandall greets the crowd with "Thanks, dawg," and he sounds a little sarcastic.

Then something remarkable happens: drummer Jesse Sandoval sits out, and Mercer picks up an acoustic guitar for "Mine's Not a High Horse," a dressing-down of a former friend. The Shins have lots of songs with generous melodies and cryptic lyrics, but something about the acoustic intimacy finally gets the arcane words across.

Mercer sings "Young Pilgrims," a sensitive young guy's shout-out to everyone like him, and suddenly it's like all the lights got turned on. Here is a frontman singing as woundedly as the Cure's Robert Smith, a guy whose convoluted

words barely conceal bruises. After the song ends he nods in the direction of the crowd, staring carefully at the floor in a manner both shy and proud. He knows what he's done.

By bringing listeners up close to words that tend to keep them at a distance, he transforms the night. The rest of the band feel it, too, and start clowning. Crandall pulls out the New Mexico state flag and drapes it on bassist Dave Hernandez like a cape. You can practically see the small-time goobers morph into rock & roll heroes.

They launch into "Saint Simon," and the crowd sings along — not just to the infectious *la-la-las* but the complicated images, too. After the show, that's the part that Mercer can't get out of his head.

"It's really flattering," he tells *Blender*. "You feel like you're really reaching certain people, the same way you were reached by music. I used to sit for hours and sing to records like [the Smiths'] *The Queen Is Dead* and [Echo and the Bunnymen's] *Ocean Rain*, so it's cool to think of somebody doing the same thing with our records."

"But you better make damn sure you remember all the lyrics, because there are people out there who know them better than you do!" Probably a few more after tonight. *RJ SMITH*

HOW'D YOU LIKE THE SHOW?

House of Blues, Chicago, June 19, 2004



"I was impressed how much they sounded like the album. It's like '80s music, and they're really able to portray that live."
MATT BREMER, 21, CHICAGO



"They're a smarty band. They're regular guys who put on an excellent show."
JENNIFER COLLINS, 33, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS



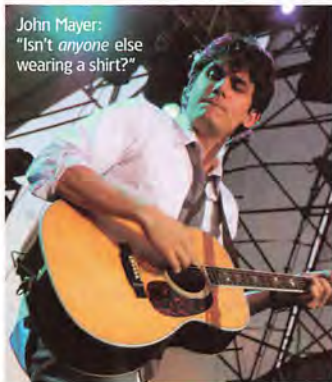
"They're amazing songwriters. I was in the front row with the teenyboppers. The Shins are smart, which makes them sexy!"
DIANDRA JONES, 24, CHICAGO

**THE GOOBERS
MORPH INTO
ROCK HEROES.**

The Darkness's Justin Hawkins: "Sexually insecure? Me?"



John Mayer: "Isn't anyone else wearing a shirt?"



Velvet Revolver: Unavailable for bar mitzvahs.



Losing Their Shirts

The rock festival comes to Atlantic City

FANTASY ISLAND
VELVET REVOLVER, THE DARKNESS,
JOHN MAYER, HOOBASTANK,
FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE, SASHA

BORGATA HOTEL, CASINO AND SPA,
ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY

JUNE 26-27, 2004 ★★★★★

"DID Y'ALL LOSE your ass at the blackjack table?" As between-song stage banter goes, this may not be standard fare, but then again, this isn't a standard show for Scott Weiland and his new bandmates. Velvet Revolver haven't been on the road long, but it's a safe bet that this is the first time the former Stone Temple Pilot has ever had to compete for an audience's attention with on-site gambling.

Part concert, part carnival, the Fantasy Island party thrown by *Maxim*, *Stuff* and *Blender* is an ADD sufferer's summertime dream come true. A sun-kissed weekend-long party in the backyard of a sprawling Atlantic City casino, it comes complete with camel rides, midgets, beach volleyball, tiki bars, roving packs of free-range bikini models and batting cages. Oh, and bands. Bands played.

The first is Fountains of Wayne, from just up the Jersey Turnpike, who kick off Saturday with a set of appropriately sunny power-pop. Though knowing hits like "Stacy's Mom" seem tailor-made for hazy, lazy afternoons like this, it's the ramshackle medley of '70s and '80s radio staples, including the Cars' "Let's Go" and ZZ Top's

"Sharp Dressed Man," that provokes festival whooping.

Sunburned and increasingly tipsy, the crowd drifts toward the main stage at the front of the makeshift fairgrounds for Hoobastank. With nü-metal on the ropes, this clean-cut quartet from the Los Angeles suburbs are distancing themselves from the tottering genre via nifty, radio-friendly singles such as "The Reason." To underline the point, their kinetic, hourlong performance is topped off by "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun." Stained this ain't.

By the time Weiland leaps onto the stage in a Freddie Mercury-style vest and officer's cap, the crowd — including Tom Morello and *The Sopranos'* Drea De Matteo — has been primed by hours of anticipation and lubrication. A roadie delivers Slash his trademark top hat, and the band tears into the opening riff of "Sucker Train Blues," the frenetic first cut from VR's debut, *Contraband*. "This is a

pretty cool fuckin' gig," Slash says as he peers out from beneath his curly black mop.

The set is heavy on the retro-hard rock of new tunes such as "Headspace" and "Fall to Pieces" — Weiland introduces the latter as his favorite of Velvet Revolver's material — and the mosh pit appears moderately fazed. Despite *Contraband's* number 1 debut on the charts, the abundance of STP and Guns N' Roses T-shirts in the crowd underlines the Velvets' singular challenge: They're an unproven entity and a beloved nostalgia act at the same time.

Not many bands could navigate such choppy waters, but Velvet Revolver are a seasoned crew. They steer clear of obvious hits yet still include enough crowd-pleasing numbers — including STP's "Crackerman" and GN'R's "It's So Easy" — to avoid audience mutiny.

"Mr. Brownstone," the show-closing ode to heroin, has the rail-thin onetime addict Weiland out-Axl'ing Axl, gyrating and growling wildly. It's obviously a song that strikes a chord for the embattled singer, and it's a darkly humorous closer for a band made up almost entirely of former addicts.

On Sunday, after a mellow set by DJ Sasha (of Sasha and

Digweed fame), John Mayer entertains ladies and their boyfriends, looking every bit the student-council president in his untucked shirt, tie and blue jeans. With the sun going down and metal on the minds of anxious Darkness fans, Mayer's blues flourishes and Dave Matthews-lite sorority-house anthems almost overstay their welcome.

If fatigue has set in from endless months of touring behind *Permission to Land*, you couldn't tell from watching the Darkness's shrill main man, Justin Hawkins. A veritable human peacock, he preens and pouts before demanding that partygoers in the bursting-at-the-seams VIP section up above come out and mingle with the crowd.

The blistering single "Get Your Hands Off My Woman" is hard to improve, but anyone trying to imagine what Def Leppard megaproducer Mutt Lange could do with the Darkness is wasting his time. Rumors that Mr. Shania Twain will produce the next album are groundless.

"I don't tend to gamble," Hawkins tells *Blender* later, eyeing the festival crowd that's heading toward the gaming tables. That's a shame. STEVE KANDELL

**"THIS IS A
PRETTY COOL
F*#KIN' GIG!"**

"I really don't see what's so 'great' about them."
"Shut up."

THE GOOD!

ONCE BITTEN

Who needs big-budget CGI special effects? Real sharks are scarier — and they work cheap! By Clark Collis

OPEN WATER

DIRECTED BY Chris Kentis

STARRING Blanchard Ryan, Daniel Travis

THE TAG LINE of 1978's *Jaws 2* — "Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water . . ." — is one of moviedom's most memorable. It is also one of its most redundant. After all, thanks to Steven Spielberg's original frightfest, there are still people reluctant to *drink* water, let alone go back into it.

Open Water's tale of a scuba-diving couple abandoned in the middle of the ocean while on vacation exploits our Spielberg-enhanced sharkophobia quite effectively. Oh, sure, as the pair, played by unknowns Blanchard Ryan and Daniel Travis, are being



Watch out! Sharks love cleavage!

transported out to sea, their guide may pooh-pooh the chances of becoming some shark's brunch ("If you see a shark and don't want to see it, close your eyes!"). But once Ryan and Travis are left bobbing

helplessly in the water following an incorrect headcount for the return trip, we know that those growing numbers of circling fins don't herald the world's first human/fish water-polo match.

The growing sense of dread felt by the audience is more than matched by the leads' own utterly believable and, as it transpires, genuine terror. The film was made on a tiny budget with no funds for any Spielbergian special effects, so director Chris Kentis simply dumped his actors in actual shark-infested waters. This, combined with the fact that Kentis shot *Open Water* on digital video, makes the result horribly realistic, as Ryan and Travis attempt to survive not just sharks but jellyfish, bouts of vomiting and a notably harsh round of the blame game. The film's resemblance to one of those vacations-from-hell documentaries is amped by the script, notably when an exasperated Travis sarcastically laments, "And the best part is, we *paid* to do this!"

Sadly, the film's conclusion wouldn't be any more disappointing if our beleaguered couple woke up to discover it had all been a (wet) dream. But for most of its length, *Open Water* will make you think twice about approaching even your toilet without a harpoon on hand.



"Somebody ordered sushi?"

JUMPING THE SHARK

How do you avoid becoming shark chow? Let's ask **George H. Burgess**, director of the International Shark Attack File



So you've been left behind in shark-infested waters. What exactly should you do? When the sharks come in close enough, you want to be very active and provide an image to them of strength. Also, I would suggest poking them in their eyes or their gills; those are sensitive areas.

That sounds easier said than done. No doubt about it. And keep in mind that their eyes and their gills are located very close to their mouth.

You can also try to give them a good pop on the nose with a camera. But again, you don't want to make a mistake and go a little south.

Anything else? I think praying is a good thing. But the fact is that sharks are not a big problem. Worldwide we've had, I think, four or five fatalities each of the last two years. But sharks are there, and they're going to take advantage of free food.



THE BAD!

**ANACONDAS:
THE HUNT FOR THE
BLOOD ORCHID**

DIRECTED BY Brett Bower, Dwight H. Little

STARRING Morris Chestnut, Eugene Byrd, Salli Richardson

BLENDER DOESN'T want to be too down on the sequel to a movie that featured the entertaining sight of Jon Voight being thrown up by a giant snake like so much Oscar-winning creamed corn. But the trailer for this follow-up to 1997's Jennifer Lopez-starring *Anaconda* looks particularly tragic even by the standards of giant-beastie movies (which, thanks to CGI, are threatening to become the world's most prolific cinematic genre). Full marks to the producers, though, for finding a leading lady who looks a bit like J.Lo if you really, *really* squint.



& THE INDIE!

CODE 46

DIRECTED BY Michael Winterbottom

STARRING Tim Robbins, Samantha Morton

LIKE STEPHEN Soderbergh's *Solaris*, this beautiful but very subdued sci-fi film from the prolific Winterbottom (*24-Hour Party People*) is much more concerned with the nature of love than the nature of people getting eaten by slaving monsters. Tim Robbins stars as a corporate investigator who heads to near-future Shanghai equipped with an "empathy virus" that allows him to know everything about people just from asking them a single question. He may also be equipped with a having-sex-with-Samantha-Morton virus, as that's what he ends up doing. Bats, camels and, bizarrely, the Clash's Mick Jones all play a part.

**BLENDER
APPROVED**

The best MOVIES of the last three months



GARDEN STATE

The film that proves death, lithium and self-pleasuring dogs are all suitable subjects for a comedy.



SHREK 2

The film that proves ogres, fairies and self-pleasuring cats are all suitable subjects for a children's comedy.

AND THE REST...

WICKER PARK

DIRECTED BY Paul McGuigan

STARRING Josh Hartnett, Matthew Lillard, Rose Byrne

THE PITCH In this remake of the French film *L'Appartement*, banker Hartnett becomes obsessed with a woman who may or may not be his mysteriously disappeared true love.

THE VERDICT Thought you'd never see "nicely Hitchcockian" and "Matthew Lillard" in the same sentence? Well, now you have!



I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD

DIRECTED BY Mike Hodges

STARRING Clive Owen, Malcolm McDowell

THE PITCH Retired drug dealer Owen is lured back into the British criminal underworld following the death of his brother. Hey, is that going to affect his 401(k)?

THE VERDICT It sounds remarkably similar to the director's 1971 classic hood-bent-on-vengeance flick *Get Carter*. And if it's only half as good, the result will still be worth a look.



CELLULAR

DIRECTED BY David R. Ellis

STARRING Kim Basinger, Chris Evans

THE PITCH Evans is called on his cell by in-danger stranger Basinger and tries to help. But — hellzapoppin'! — his phone is perilously low on batteries. . . .

THE VERDICT Writer Larry Cohen's similarly telephonic *Phone Booth* sucked. *Cellular*'s trailer, however, makes even buying a charger look pretty damned exciting.



RESIDENT EVIL: APOCALYPSE

DIRECTED BY Alexander Witt

STARRING Milla Jovovich, Eric Mabius, Sienna Guillory, Oded Fehr

THE PITCH Jovovich battles zombies and bioengineered monsters while escaping from Raccoon City in as few clothes as possible.

THE VERDICT Jovovich can act like *Blender* can perform open-heart surgery — not that that stops us! — but the fake-ad trailer is extremely creepy.



THE COOKOUT

DIRECTED BY Lance Rivera

STARRING Quran Pender, Queen Latifah

THE PITCH When a young basketball player signs a \$30 million deal with the New Jersey Nets, he celebrates by loading up on crank and molesting a cheerleader. Oh, sorry — that should have read "by having a cookout."

THE VERDICT Expect Queen Latifah to entertain as a security officer — and expect more than a few "hot sausage"-related jokes.



EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING

DIRECTED BY Renny Harlin

STARRING Stellan Skarsgård, Gabriel Mann

THE PITCH Much-troubled horror prequel. Skarsgård's Father Merrin encounters the pea soup-loving demon Pazuzu for the first time while doing missionary work in Africa.

THE VERDICT The first version of the film, directed by Paul Schrader, was considered unreleasable — much as replacement Harlin's recent output (*Mindkillers*) should have been.



**LAST GOOD
MOVIE YOU SAW?**



**YING-YANG TWINS
CRUNK RAPPERS**

"The Passion of the Christ. The reason should be obvious to anyone who's ever read a page of the Bible."



Winslet: "I love you."
Carrey: "Installing that ceiling mirror was a really good idea!"

HEAD GAMES

Kate Winslet and Jim Carrey have an affair to misremember in this haunting brainwash romance. By Clark Collis

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

DIRECTED BY Michel Gondry

STARRING Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Kirsten Dunst, Elijah Wood, Mark Ruffalo
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

IMAGINE THERE WAS a way you could erase large chunks of your memory. OK, now imagine there was a way you could erase large chunks of your memory without drinking a bottle of tequila. That's the intriguing premise put forward by this romantic-comedy collaboration between screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, of *Being John Malkovich* fame, and director Michel Gondry, of that *White Stripes* video with the *Legos* fame.

Jim Carrey, in his most restrained and likeable performance to date, plays Joel Barish, an introverted white-collar drone whose life is turned upside down when he falls in love with luminescent-haired live wire Kate Winslet. But the relationship falls apart, and, adding insult to injury, Carrey discovers that Winslet has had all memory of it wiped from her brain by a new scientific breakthrough that implausibly

involves sticking a helmet decorated with a flashing button on your noggin.

This is a step too far even for a doormat like Carrey, who retaliates by asking Winslet's doctor (Tom Wilkinson) to remove all memory of Winslet from his memory. Forced to revisit their relationship as part of the procedure, the now-unconscious Carrey regrets his decision and attempts to hide within his own gray matter some memory of Winslet from Wilkinson's team of stoner brain-wipers (Ruffalo, Dunst and Wood, the last of

whom has used knowledge gleaned in the course of monkeying around with Winslet's brain

It's Jim Carrey's most likeable performance.

to become her new beau).

Confused? You won't be. Kaufman and Gondry marginalize the film's creaky sci-fi aspects and concentrate instead on Carrey's desperate and funny romantic quest. Kaufman may not be able to resist littering his script with some typically sour notes — Joel moans at one point that Valentine's Day is "a holiday invented by greeting-card companies to make people feel like crap." But the end product makes for a perfect date movie, ideal for February 14 — or, for that matter, any other day.

CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM: THE COMPLETE SECOND SERIES

HBO HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

In this set of shows from the Funniest Sitcom Ever, Larry David is accused of having an "ass fetish," orders one of those "vanilla bullshit things" at Starbucks and accidentally injures Shaquille O'Neal at a Lakers game. Don'tcha hate it when that happens? Larry does. But then, he hates everything, even the slogan of his own network, HBO: "It's not TV"? It's TV! What do they think people are watching?"



Predator: "All right, who stole my bra?"

KILL BILL VOLUME 2

MIRAMAX HOME VIDEO

★★★

The less bloody, more thoughtful half of "Q&U's" vengeance saga boasts showdowns between Uma Thurman's hit woman, David Carradine, Daryl Hannah and, most entertainingly, alcoholic titty-bar bouncer Michael Madsen. *Volume 2* also answers the questions about what exactly happened at the Bride's wedding (a lot of shooting), how Thurman became such a shit-hot martial artist (a lot of running up and down steps) and whether the whole *Kill Bill* saga is anywhere near as good as *Reservoir Dogs* or *Pulp Fiction* (it isn't).

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

Given its lack of obvious appeal to atheists, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, the squeamish and people who think Mel Gibson is a total dick — sizeable constituencies all — the record-breaking success of this sincere but sincerely violent film still seems rather amazing. Of course, many Christians will

need little convincing that this is the essential purchase of the year. But non-believers can relish Rosalinda Celentano's nicely spooky Satan — and what other movie lets you brush up on your ancient Aramaic?

PREDATOR

20TH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★★

When it was released in 1987, *Predator* was naively assumed to be a mere monster movie set in a jungle. But given the subsequent careers of stars Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jesse Ventura, it's now clear that the film was some sort of weird political-candidate training center. (Incredibly, a third cast member, Sonny Landham, ran for governor of Kentucky in 2002.) Regardless, it remains an entertainingly testosterone-heavy slice of '80s action mayhem, never far away from James Bond-on-steroids quips ("Stick around!" Arnie declares after nailing a goon to the wall with his knife).

THE SCORSESE COLLECTION

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

"You talkin' to me?" Actually, Travis, we're not, as this box set of Marty S's



Curb Your Enthusiasm: "It's gonna take a while to dislodge that ball!"



Kill Bill Volume 2: Being Uma and Ethan's couples counselor is a thankless task.

films doesn't feature *Taxi Driver* (or *Raging Bull* or *King of Comedy*, all essential Scorsese). Instead, contained herein are the OK-ish likes of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *After Hours* and the auteur's first feature, *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* But we also get the Robert De Niro/Harvey Keitel act-off *Mean Streets* and, most importantly, a two-disc special edition of the Mafia epic *Goodfellas*, which comes with commentaries from Scorsese and the real Henry Hill, plus four new documentaries.

TAKING LIVES

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★★

When special agent Angelina Jolie is brought in by the Montreal police to help track a serial killer, local cop Olivier Martinez is outraged! Because she's a woman? No. Because her couch-size lips can't fit through crime-scene doors? No, his problem probably lies with the fact that Jolie, unlike the audience, falls for every one of the slayer's feeble snooze-inducing tricks. But she does the ol' higgedy-higgedy with Ethan Hawke about three-quarters of the way through, so remember to set your alarm clock for that.

THE TIN DRUM

CRITERION COLLECTION

★★★

An extremely "European" European art-house movie, Volker Schlöndorff's controversial Oscar-winning 1979 film starred an 11-year-old actor as a child born with adult intellect who refuses to grow past the age of 3. Disturbing underage sex scenes, disgusting eel-eating sequences and, of course, a subplot involving midget Nazis ensue. More easily digestible is the accompanying documentary detailing the Oklahoma authorities' attempts to destroy all video copies of the movie back in the mid-'90s.

WALKING TALL

MGM/UA HOME VIDEO

★★★

When returning veteran The Rock discovers that his sleepy, timber-producing hometown has been turned into a den of gambling and corruption, he does the only thing a man called "The Rock" can do: He beats up everyone in sight with a large piece of wood! And very entertaining do said beatings turn out to be.

BLENDER APPROVED

The best DVDs of the last three months



EASY RIDERS, RAGING BULLS

SHOUT! FACTORY

A deft adaptation of Peter Biskind's best-selling book detailing how '70s movie brats did a hell of a lot of drugs. Oh, and made some good films, too.



DAWN OF THE DEAD

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOME VIDEO

Sarah Polley tries to avoid becoming breakfast for a slaver army of surprisingly athletic zombies. Mmm, Sarah Polley for breakfast...

MUSIC DVDs

BY CLARK COLLIS



CHEAP TRICK FROM TOKYO TO YOU

BIG 3 ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

Tokyo has been good to Cheap Trick, whose *At Budokan* live album remains the band's career pinnacle. But it's a tossup as to whether the ordinary performances of "Surrender," "Dream Police," et al. here are more or less fun than being stomped on by local boy Godzilla. What makes *From Tokyo to You* almost unmissable viewing are the quartet's lie-filled interviews about the Trick's early years, in which they invented Pop Tarts, voiced Rocky and Bullwinkle and played "donkey baseball."



TOM DOWD & THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

PALM PICTURES

★★★★

Legendary producer Tom Dowd helped make stars out of Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Lynyrd Skynyrd and countless others. Bizarrely, he also helped develop the atom bomb, as is revealed in this well-crafted and interview-heavy tribute to the recently deceased knob-twiddler.



CAT STEVENS

MAJIKAT

EAGLE VISION

★★★★

This concert film captures the folk-pop genius at the peak of his fame. But what with the support act — *miming* illusionists — and Stevens's wan stage presence, his decision to dedicate himself to Islam months later was perhaps more Allah's gain than Lollapalooza's loss. ADAM HIGGINBOTHAM



DIRTY STATES OF AMERICA

LYRICIST LOUNGE/IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★

An amiable and frequently booty-centric documentary about Southern rap and such related phenomena as in-car chandeliers and how the fact that Florida resembles a "big old-ass dick" has affected its musical output. Includes contributions from David Banner and — "Whaaat?" — Lil Jon.



INXS

THE BEST OF INXS: I'M ONLY LOOKING

RHINO

★★★★

As this video collection's accompanying documentary repeatedly reminds us, INXS were visual "pioneers." Alas, that spirit of invention seems largely evidenced by a lot of unnecessary wearing of sunglasses indoors and occasional bouts of graveyard-based sax-playing.

WIN THIS DVD!

WE HAVE 30 COPIES of the new *Purple Rain* DVD to give away.

To win, just answer this: How are Prince and his costar Morris Day related?

Go to blender.com to enter and see the rules.



Jim Morrison enjoys an extended version of "The End."

THE
BEST PART
OF A BIG
BOOK!

JIM AND JANIS GET SMASHED!

Hollywood, 1967: Janis Joplin meets Jim Morrison — and finds out that he's a very ugly drunk!

» JIM DIDN'T TAKE [his girlfriend] Pamela to screenwriter Gavin Lambert's big party for Andy Warhol in Santa Monica Canyon. It was a Young Hollywood crowd, with oddball musician Tiny Tim performing for movie stars Warren Beatty, Julie Christie and Tuesday Weld. . . . Jim met director Roman Polanski and his stoned starlet wife, Sharon Tate. Janis Joplin — the hot, gravel-voiced singer of Big Brother and the Holding Company — was there too, dressed in handmade crushed velvet clothes and peacock feathers, holding her trademark bottle of Southern Comfort.

Jim sat down next to Janis and threw his arm around her. He was drinking Scotch. Jim asked Janis about herself, and she blurted a few phrases about her troubled high school years in Texas, where she had been mocked and shunned because

her family wasn't well off. After an hour, and after many more drinks and some pills, just as Janis was laughing a little too raucously at something Jim had said, he grabbed her by her hair and suddenly forced her face down into his crotch.

It was an awful moment. People near them backed off. Furious at this humiliation,

Janis hit Jim in the face and walked away, calling him an asshole over her shoulder. "I know I'm an asshole," he said to her back.

Later, as she was leaving, an even drunker Jim stopped her car in the driveway and tried to speak to her. Witnesses said she rolled down her window and, when Jim bent down to apologize, she smashed her Southern Comfort bottle over his head before driving off, cursing him.

Excerpted from *Jim Morrison: Life, Death, Legend*, by Stephen Davis, © 2004. Reprinted with permission from Gotham Books.



CUBA AND ITS MUSIC

FROM THE FIRST DRUMS TO THE MAMBO

By Ned Sublette

★★★★ CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS, \$36

Ned Sublette's enthralling tome argues that Cuban music makes up a third "Great Tradition" beside the better-known black-and-white dichotomy. Slavery, prostitution, casino dreams and magical drums are all part of the colorful context from which emerged the hip-shaking rumbas, mambos and charangas that altered our version of pop music. Ending in 1952, *Cuba* reads like an epic novel of startling connections and secret sounds begging for rediscovery. RICHARD GEHR



KILLER QUEEN

Photos by Mick Rock

★★★★ VIA 800-775-1111; GENESIS-PUBLICATIONS.COM, \$360

Killer Queen opens with a quote from the late Freddie Mercury in which he declares that he and his band "do things that people least expect" — ironic, given that a lavish and costly collection of photos such as this is exactly what we'd expect from rock's most pomp-tastic band. To be fair, Mick Rock's snaps of Queen in their mid-'70s glam heyday are fantastic (or fantastically stupid), and all 2,500 limited-edition copies have been signed by Rock, Brian May and Roger Taylor. CLARK COLLIS



LIT RIFFS

Edited By Matthew Miele

★★★★ MTV BOOKS/POCKET BOOKS, \$14

In 1981, music critic Lester Bangs fictionalized the genesis of Rod Stewart's "Maggie May." Now, not wanting to let a good idea die on the vine, MTV Books is republishing Bangs's "riff" with 23 new short stories inspired by (mostly rock) songs. Though generally worthwhile, as with prescription drugs, the results vary — Jonathan Lethem's "National Anthem" captures the melancholy of "Speeding Motorcycle," but Tanker Dane should have left the maudlin perfection of Jeff Buckley's version of "Hallelujah" alone. If you can't figure out iTunes, a partial soundtrack is available. ADAM BREBER



SO WHAT!

THE GOOD, THE MAD AND THE UGLY
By Metallica. Edited by Steffan Chirazi

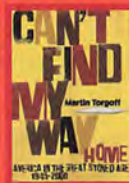
★★★★ BROADWAY BOOKS, \$30

Some might argue that *So What!* is a fitting title for this authorized collection of interviews, journals and articles taken from Metallica's official magazine, because that publication was started in 1993, a few years past the band's prime. Nevertheless, diehards will enjoy the chapters in which the band answers probing fan questions ("How did you propose to your wife?" James Hetfield: "I hid the ring under a dead elk in the garage and told her to skin it") and the hundreds of photos that cover the boys' entire career in exhaustive detail. BEN MITCHELL



BLENDER APPROVED

The best BOOKS of the last three months



CAN'T FIND MY WAY HOME
AMERICA IN THE GREAT STOMED AGE, 1945–2000

By Martin Torgoff
SIMON & SCHUSTER

The vivid tale of how sex, drugs, and rock & roll got to be such good friends.



PERFECT SOUND FOREVER
THE STORY OF PAVEMENT

By Rob Jovanovic
CITADEL PRESS

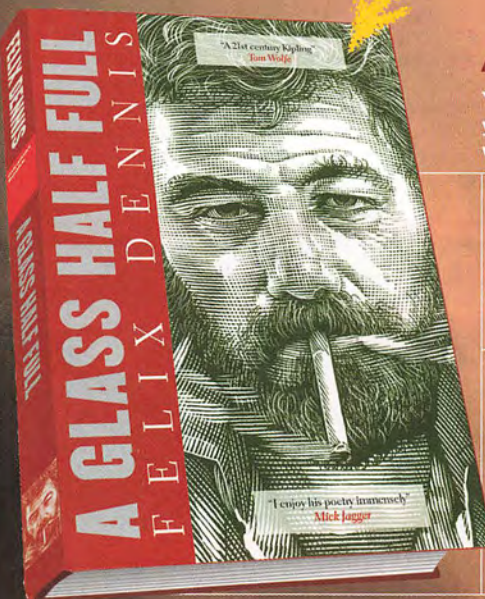
A fond — and extremely detailed — look back at the brief career of the quintessential indie-rock band.

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- THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



ATTENTION BLENDER READERS:

You are invited as Felix Dennis, owner and founder of *Blender*, serves as much free wine as you can (safely) drink, and reads from his new book, *A Glass Half Full*. Check out www.felixdennis.com for more details on the DID I MENTION THE FREE WINE? tour!

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"Now will you turn that music down?"

DIESEL POWER

Destroy robot guards and stick shivs in uppity inmates in this gritty Vin Diesel tie-in. By Jonah Weiner and Gabe Soria

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL — PS2, XBOX

★★★★

IT'S THE FIRST thing they tell you in the slammer: Don't drop the soap in the shower. But amorous inmates are the least of your concerns in maximum-security prison Butcher Bay. Far more pressing is the 10-foot-tall robot sentry with machine-gun arms trying to empty a clip of armor-piercing rounds into your face.

A tie-in to the summer blockbuster *The Chronicles of Riddick*, this escape adventure

features Vin Diesel's likeness, voice and wooden machismo. The twist is that you've got to break into the prison before you can break out — a feat that involves snapping guards' necks and currying favor with other inmates (usually by offering them drugs you've managed to scrounge).

It's violent: Before you've looted a dead guard's corpse for an assault rifle, you'll have to make do with brass knuckles and screwdrivers. It's spooky: Stealth is key, so you spend a lot of time creeping around in deep shadows and claustrophobic mazes of ventilation shafts. And it's silly: Xzibit pops up in one particularly out-of-place cameo. Sadly, you can't ask him to pimp your cell!

STIR CRAZY!

Going to jail? Former inmate Tommy Apodaca has a few tips for you

1. COLLECT STAMPS

"Stockpile as many stamps as you can. Forget cigarettes; the new prison currency is stamps. All gambling and getting along with inmates involve how you manage stamps!"

2. STAY BUSY

"Work out all you can, play basketball, work what jobs you can and read and reread the complete works of Danielle Steel!"

3. LOVE B.E.T.

"Learn to appreciate the B.E.T. channel. What TV privileges you get turn into a democracy when picking a channel. B.E.T. always wins. Prisoners will watch it 24/7 if possible!"

4. HANG IN THERE

"Get through the first month. After that, the routines become familiar and the days go by faster." AS TOLD TO CHUCK MINDENHALL



ATHENS 2004

SONY — PS2

Sony has done a gold-medal job distilling this summer's Olympic Games into 25 well-chosen events, including track and field, skeet shooting and gymnastics (although, sadly, no synchronized swimming). But the game's meticulous attention to detail also provides some unintentional laughs: While participating in the archery events, players will notice that practically nobody is watching from the stadium's stands. Just like in real life! ★★★



HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

EA — PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

Blender's prayers that the new Harry Potter game would be a gloss on *Saturday Night Live*'s Potter parody, in which Lindsay Lohan played a distractingly busy Hermione back from vacation, went unanswered. Instead, we got a by-the-book movie adaptation in which little wizard kids run through the musty corridors of their fancy boarding school, casting spells with hokey faux-Latin names. Hogwarts, indeed. ★★



KARAOKE REVOLUTION VOLUME 2

KONAMI — PS2

Karaoke Revolution's sheer ridiculousness is also its greatest strength. It's dumb, but crickey, it's fun! Using an add-on microphone, players attempt to out-sing one another, and its 35-song repertoire, while not even comparable to the selection at the worst karaoke bar, includes great drunken-caterwauling standbys like "Sweet Home Alabama" and "Let's Get It On," as well as new-school hits like "Toxic." ★★★



SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

THQ — PS2

Presumably, being a member of an elite counterterrorism organization dispatched around the globe to mow down villains and prevent the spread of a deadly virus would be an exciting life. But in this shoot-'em-up game, the combat is stiff and tedious, the graphics feel cheap and the cut scenes are laughably hammy. It makes special ops seem about as thrilling as an accountant's office on April 16. ★★

BLENDER APPROVED

The best GAMES of the last three months



RED DEAD REVOLVER

ROCKSTAR — PS2, XBOX

Be an ersatz Clint Eastwood in this homage to the spaghetti Westerns of the '60s from the makers of *Vice City*.



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

MIDWAY — PS2, XBOX

Like Uri Geller crossed with Rambo, play as a paramilitary badass — with mind-control powers!

A full-page photograph of Avril Lavigne. She is wearing a black corset-style top, has long blonde hair with dark roots, and is holding a black feathered mask over her eyes with her hands. She is also wearing a black wristband on her right wrist and a thin black bracelet on her left wrist. The background is a light blue wall.

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PENCIL ME IN!

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword! Starring 19 Across!

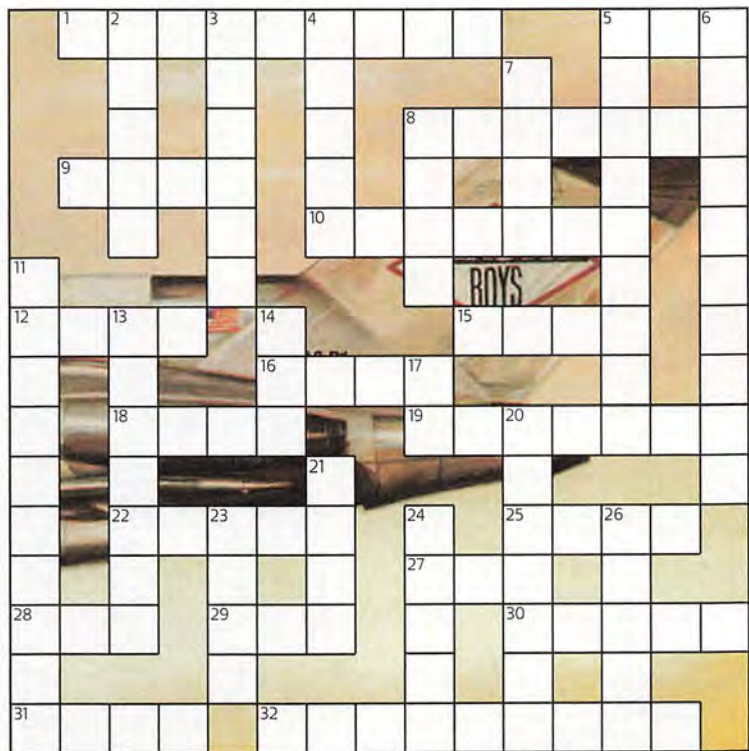
BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 1 Recently reunited '80s college band whose monkey's gone to heaven
- 5 The White Stripes' drummer
- 8 Guitar god, a.k.a. "Slowhand"
- 9 Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo, collectively
- 10 *Star Search* host Hall
- 12 C&W icon who recently worked with Jack White
- 15 George Michael's '80s duo
- 16 "99 Luftballoons" singer
- 18 Eminem sampled her on "Stan"
- 19 The Beasties had one to ill
- 22 R&B singer with 2004 album *Confessions*
- 25 She's coming out, so you better get this party started
- 27 French electronica duo with 2004 album *Talkie Walkie*
- 28 ___ *Out of Hell* (Meat Loaf)
- 29 Emo-punks ___ Found Glory
- 30 Wind & Fire's bandmate?
- 31 Symphonic British rock band with 2004 LP *Absolution*
- 32 Former Smiths singer with "Irish Blood, English Heart"

DOWN

- 2 Mariah Carey's sticky 1997 hit
- 3 Sean Combs's alter ego
- 4 "Dirrty" singer
- 5 Wu-Tang Clan rapper with a sitcom on Fox (two words)
- 6 Paradise City residents (three words)
- 7 Street to which the Rolling Stones were exiled in 1972
- 8 His last hit was a cover of Nine Inch Nails' "Hurt"
- 11 Jay-Z's oft-mashed-up swan song
- 13 SoCal band with 2004 remake of Talk Talk's "It's My Life"
- 14 Ambient-music pioneer Brian
- 17 "Weird" novelty parody penner
- 20 Pot-centric hip-hop trio ___ Hill
- 21 All she wants to do is soak up the sun
- 23 *American Idol* loser, a.k.a. "Hong Kong's Ricky Martin"
- 24 He thinks your body is a wonderland
- 26 Sonic Youth's latest album, *Sonic* ___



NOT ONLY IS the iRiver PMP-120 media player totally awesome — it also plays your movies and music and displays photos! Send us your puzzle and contact info by September 7, 2004. We'll pick a winner at random and post the winner's name at blender.com/crossword. Go to blender.com for all official rules.

POP HISTORY! 1946–PRESENT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAS VEGAS

WRITTEN BY CLARK COLLIS. ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN JAY



↑ It was Mafia kingpin Bugs Siegel who first came up with the idea of a gambling/entertainment mecca in Nevada's desert.



↑ Despite the reluctance of his fellow mobsters, Siegel persevered with the plan.



↑ All went well until ...



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→ The 30-year-old country sensation is the most famous person in Pocahontas, Illinois, enjoys chewing tobacco and is "obnoxious" after a couple of drinks. So *Blender* nervously asks...

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

WHO DOES GRETCHEN WILSON THINK SHE IS?

This is the first self-portrait you've ever drawn. What mood would you say it depicts?

It looks inquisitive, doesn't it? It looks like she's saying, "Tell me something."

Why are you feeling inquisitive?

Three months ago, I had dinner every night with my family, went to Wal-Mart, read my little girl a bedtime story, watched TV for two hours and went to bed. I paid the bills, took the trash out. I was turned down by every label in Nashville at least once. Now, jeez, everything's changed: I'm in New York for a photo shoot, I'm on *The Today Show*, someone is picking out clothes for me. I'm just a little girl from a small town: Pocahontas, Illinois, 727 people.

If you're the most famous person from Pocahontas, Illinois, who's second?
Probably my mom.

Did you have a nickname when you were in school?
Punky, after Punky Brewster. She would wear one red sock and one black sock, or one red barrette and one white barrette. I did stuff like that, too.

Did it look good?

A lot of the things I did didn't look good. I was one of those punk kids who listened to AC/DC and Lynyrd Skynyrd and didn't follow the rules.

Did you get in a lot of trouble?

I got in trouble for fighting at school. My mom was pretty easy on me. She let me stay home for two weeks to watch the reunion of Luke and Laura on *General Hospital*.

Have you ever been arrested?

I don't think I was ever hauled into jail. The police would stop by and talk to my mom, but I couldn't tell you whether it was about me or my uncle, who was in trouble a lot. One time, I was drunk on Jack Daniel's and got into a fight. I was out of control, so a cop handcuffed me and told me to shut up and sit still. But you know, he was a friend of the family's.

Who was the last person you hit?

Probably my ex-husband's brother. I was fighting with my ex-husband, and he stepped in and shoved me, so I slapped him. The cops came that night, too [laughs]. I've had my share of fights. I always tell people to be careful, because if you see my earrings come out, you know I'm getting ready to go.

What are you like when you're drunk?

I'm an asshole [laughs]. Loud, obnoxious, crazy. I quit drinking whiskey a long time ago. It made me mean. A couple of glasses of wine mellow me out, but if I'm drinking shots, I'm ready to go all night.

Were you drinking last night?

Yes. We went to Hogs & Heifers, and they pulled me up on the bar and sang along to "Redneck Woman" on the jukebox.

Were you an asshole?

I don't think so. They cut me off early.

What personal habit do you have that other people find annoying?

I chew tobacco. People think that's gross.

It's not the chewing so much as the spitting.

Yeah. I started when I was 10 or 11 years old. My uncle probably told me it was a cool thing to do. I remember throwing up the first time. It's just a redneck thing, I guess.

How would you characterize your taste in sex?

Direct. I've never really been into hours of foreplay. When I'm ready, I'm ready.

What kind of music do you hate?

Drum machines. Tuned vocals. Lots of reverb. I hate that.

That's most of today's music.

Yeah. But not mine. [BLENDER]

"I'VE NEVER BEEN INTO FOREPLAY. WHEN I'M READY, I'M READY."

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